



Athmhuscailt an Iarthair

Ag sárú míchothramaíochtaí sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta

Awakening the West

Overcoming Social and Economic Inequality

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Awakening the West:
Overcoming Social and Economic Inequality

Presented to the oireachtas joint committee on
Arts, Sports, Tourism, Rural, Community and Gaeltacht affairs

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Arts, Sports, Tourism, Rural, Community and Gaeltacht affairs

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Brollach an Rapóirtéara: ón tSeanadóir Pearse Doherty



Mar dhuine de bhunadh Dhún na nGall Thiar ó dhúchas, tá cur amach agam ar na dúshláin atá ag mo phobal agus mo chontae féin. Chonaic mé Dún na nGall fágtha ar an trá fholamh le linn do chlár stáit bheith curtha i bhfeidhm ag ranna Rialtais.

Chonaic mé seirbhísí ríthábhachtacha bheith tarraingthe siar, seirbhísí amhail busanna áitiúla a rinne ceangal idir pobail tuaithe agus bailte, nó oifigí poist a bhí ag croílár ár bpobail. Mar thoradh ar scriosadh agus ar chliseadh earnálacha traidisiúnta fostaíochta, amhail na tionscail teicstíle agus iascaireachta, mar aon le bánú na tuaithe ag feirmeoirí beaga, bhí titim i líon na ndaoine agus mar thoradh air sin dífhostaíocht agus bochtaineacht.

Ní rud nua dúinne é an meathlú reatha i gceantair thuaithe i nDún na nGall. Is é an taithí atá ag teaghlach Dhún na nGall le glúine anuas ná an chailliúint post, an gearradh seirbhísí, an tearcinfheistíocht i mbonneagar agus an mhuintir óga ar imirce. Bíodh sin mar atá, ní hé seo scéal Dhún na nGall amháin: is é seo scéal na bpobail ó Bhéarra go hInis Eoghain, scéal na bpobal ag troid in éadán díothaithe, ar son a marthanais féin.

B'iontach liom é na cosúlachtaí, agus mé ag taisteal fud fad an lathair, go háirithe nuair a sheas mé i dtoghchán na hEorpa, idir pobail eile ar bhord na farraige agus mo cheantar féin. Dhaingnigh na daoine aonarach agus grúpaí ar bhuail mé leo

an dearcadh s'agam go bhfuil an bás mall i ndán d'iarthar na hÉireann mar gheall ar na ciorruithe.

Níos luaithe sa bhliain, shuigh mé le bean bhródúil ó lathar na hÉireann, bean a chaith 60 bliain ag reáchtáil oifig an phoist áitiúil, a chuir glas ar an doras don uair dheireanach. Le hioncaim chomh íseal sin, ní raibh duine ar bith ann chun a háit a ghlacadh. Post eile caillte, seirbhís eile imithe. Ar an lá céanna, druideadh trí oifig an phoist eile in lathar na hÉireann. Ar an drochuair, ní ábhar iontais é an druidim san earnáil seo. Tá stáisiún Garda, siopaí coirnéil agus pubanna áitiúla uile ag dul an bealach céanna.

Toisc an daonra beag in iarthar na hÉireann, gur ceantar tuaithe é agus an leithlis a bhíonn ar chuid mhór daoine, mothaíonn pobail nach féidir leo deireadh a chur leis an mheathlú. Níl chluintear a nguth i ndorchlaí na cumhachta. Tá a gcuid stocairí rólag chun an brú a chur atá de dhíth chun athrú a dhéanamh. I gcuid mhór cásanna, bíonn na pobail seo in éadan a chéile i dtroid "idir eatarthu" idir seirbhísí a choinneáil nó infheistíocht a mhealladh.

Ba phribhléid é domsa bualadh le roinnt daoine iontacha sna ceantair seo a oibríonn ó dhubh do dubh le tacú lena gcás. Gan a gcuid iarrachtaí bheadh an cás i bhfad níos measa. Ar an drochuair tá i bhfad níos mó de dhíth. Tá idirghabháil ar ardleibhéal de dhíth orthu go práinneach má tá a gclár forbartha agus pleananna ceantar áitiúil le bheith curtha i bhfeidhm.

Creidim go bhfuil an t-am linn anois do phobail iarthar na hÉireann, grúpaí gnó, eagraíochtaí spóirt, oibrithe, feirmeoirí, iascairí agus ionadaithe tofa le teacht le chéile chun aontú ar ardán comhaontaithe chun ár réigiún a athfhorbairt. Creidim, má thagaimid le chéile, gur féidir linn beartas rialtais a athrú, is féidir linn an meath a thiontú agus todhchaí inmharthana dár bpobail a chinntiú. Is é atá sa tuarascáil seo iarracht chun tús a chur leis an phróiseas.

Thosaigh obair ar an tuarascáil míonna ó shin i mbailte agus i sráidbhaile fud fad lathar na hÉireann nuair a shuigh mé síos agus labhair mé agus nuair a d'éist mé leis na múrthaí grúpaí pobail, ceardchumann, gnóthaí áitiúla, cumainn tráchtála, boird fhiontraíochta agus feidhmeannaigh in eagraíochtaí

stáit a raibh freagracht orthu chun poist agus seirbhísí fud fad cósta an Iarthair a sholáthar. Ba mhaith liom barúil daoine a dhéileáil leis na dúshlán eacnamaíocha agus sóisialta a mbíonn pobail in Iarthar na hÉireann i ngleic leo Domhnach agus dálach a chlosteáil ar an láthair. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leo siúd a ghlac an t-am le bualadh liom agus a chuidigh liom an tuarascáil seo a chur le chéile. Is é an rún atá agam ná teacht ar ais chuig gach ceann de na pobail seo sna míonna atá romhainn chun na moltaí a pléadh a thabhairt i gcrích.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le mo chomhghleacaithe ar an Chomhchoiste Oireachtais um Ealaíona, Spórt, Turasóireacht, Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta, a chonaic go raibh gá leis an cineál tuarascála seo agus a cheap mé féin chun gníomhú mar rapóirtéir. Is é seo, creidim, an chéad tuarascáil dá cineál le blianta beaga anuas le déileáil go domhan leis na ceistanna a d'éirigh as éagóir gheografach.

Leagan an 12 chaibidil amach go cruinn an cás reatha eacnamaíoch, polaitiúil, sóisialta agus cultúrtha fud fad réigiúin bhord farraige an Iarthair maidir le:

- ◆ Treochtaí daonra agus saol pobail;
- ◆ Bonneagar fisiceach;
- ◆ Forbairt gheilleagair agus fiontraíochta;
- ◆ Seirbhísí sóisialta agus sláinte agus oideachas san áireamh;
- ◆ Cuimsiú sóisialta;
- ◆ Na hoileáin agus an Ghaeltacht;
- ◆ Struchtúir pholaitiúla agus stáit.

Scrúdaíonn gach mír, go réasúnta mion, an status quo mar atá i bpobail an Iarthair. Breathnaíonn sí ar thionchar beartais rialtais ar fhorbairt faoi láthair agus déanann sí moltaí nuair is gá chun cothromaíocht agus comhionannas a bhaint amach don Iarthar.

Léiríonn 'Athmhuscailt an Iarthair' go mbíonn neamhionannas réigiúnach forleatach agus is iomaí cineál ann. Is lom ar fad é an bhearna idir an tOirthear agus an tIarthar maidir le comparáidí sa bhonneagar. Is cuma más é an t-iartród, na bóithre, an gás nó leictreachas atá i gceist tá an tIarthar ar gcúl ar fad i dtaca leis an gcaighdeán atá á sholáthar san Oirthear agus tá tionchar uafásach ar an gcumas chun poist a chruthú agus chun pobail tuaithe bhríomhara a chothabháil. Níl ann do mhacasamháil dorchla Bhaile Átha Cliath/ Bhéal Feirste san Iarthar. Agus mé ag scríobh, tá clár ama chun Bóthar Dorchla an Atlantaigh agus

Dorchla Iarnróid an Iarthair ag sleamhnú agus leoga, ní cinnte go mbeadh todhchaí ann don dá thionscadal rithábhachtacha seo.

Cé gur féidir forbairt gheilleagair an Oirthir agus go háirithe, forbairt Bhaile Átha Cliath agus Béal Feirste, a mhíniú go stairiúil trína ngaireacht don Bhreatain agus a stádas mar bhailte poirt - níl féidir an leithcheal leanúnach a chosaint in éadan bhord farraige an Iarthair in Éirinn nua.

Tá an tIarthar tuaithe ag cailleadh daonra ar ráta millteanach de dheasca meathlú fostaíochta traidisiúnta i bhfeirmeoireacht agus in iascaireacht. Le déanaí bhí na ceantair seo ag brath barraíocht ar fhostaíocht ón fhoirgníocht: tá siad ag fulaingt anois go díréireach ón chor drámata chun donais san earnáil sin.

Cé go n-aithnítear neamhionannas geografach maidir le geilleagar, tá éagóir réigiúnach maidir le seirbhísí poiblí gan aithint go fóill. Ní féidir dul chun cinn inbhuanaithe eacnamaíochta bheith ann, gan dúshraith na seirbhísí sóisialta.

D'fhulaing pobail tuaithe in Iarthar na hÉireann cailliúint seirbhísí sláinte rithábhachtacha, clabhsúr oifige poist agus íosghrádaíodh seirbhísí na nGardaí. Tá laghdú brí córasach ag dul ar aghaidh lenár n-ospidéal phoiblí. I mbarúil an rialtais ní sholáthraíonn ár n-ospidéal bheaga seirbhísí éigeandála, ach meastar go gcuireann siad 'acmhainní amú' ar féidir le hospidéal móra uirbeacha iad a úsáid - suite go príomha ar chósta an Oirthir.

Is é an toradh a bheidh ar éagothromaíochtaí sóisialta sa deireadh thiar ná bás pobal. Is fadhb ar leith é nach féidir le pobail neamh-uirbeacha a gcéimithe a choinneáil. Is deacracht leanúnach é an bhearna idir gnóthachtáil oideachasúil agus deiseanna eacnamaíocha.

Fiú nuair a éiríonn go hiontach le mic léinn san Iarthar, cailleadh siad amach. Is féidir teacht ar chuid de na leibhéil is airde gnóthachtála oideachas dara leibhéal agus na leibhéil is airde clárúcháin tríú leibhéal a fháil i gcontaetha an Iarthair. Bíodh sin mar atá, ní fhaigheann ach 38% de chéimithe an Iarthair a gcéad phost ina gcontae dúchais i gcomparáid le 79.5% de chéimithe an Oirthir. Is díotáil shoiléir é sin ar theip an stáit chun caitheamh le gach duine dár ndaoine óga mar a gcéanna.

D'aithin an rialtas go raibh gá le hidirghabháil stáit nuair a bhunaigh sé Choimisiún Forbartha an Iarthair lena chinntiú go

raibh forbairt chothromaithe réigiúnach ann idir an tOirthear agus an tIarthar. Sa lá atá inniu ann, mar a léiríonn torthaí na tuarascála seo go soiléir, tá gá le hathruithe bunúsacha i mbeartais agus i gcleachtais maidir le hIarthar na hÉireann thar ceann an rialtais agus an stáit araon.

Ní éilím go dtugann an tuarascáil seo gach réiteach ar na dúshláin uile in aghaidh na bpobal fud fad bhord farraige an Iarthair, ach dá gcuirfí na moltaí i bhfeidhm ba mhór an comhartha é ar an chéad chéim chun tosaigh. Cé go n-adhmaím nach mbaineann cuid de na fadhbanna a tugadh chun suntais leis an Iarthar amháin, chuirfinn ina luí gur tromchúisí san Iarthar iad de dheasca fiche nó tríocha bliain de dhrochbheartas agus d'éaspa gnímh.

Ba léir an frustrachas ag cruinnithe a reáchtáil mé féin fud fad na ndeich gcontae maidir teip na rialtas i ndiaidh a chéile chun dul i ngleic le neamhionannas idir an tOirthear agus an tIarthar. Theastaigh ó na meáin san oirthear mar aon lucht acadúil agus tráchtareacht pholaitiúil cur síos a dheanamh ar na tuairimí seo mar "bharúlacha". Léiríonn an tuarascáil seo go soiléir gur réaltacht chrua é an neamhionannas réigiúnach.

Tá sé do-ghlactha do Rialtas tionscadail bonneagair atá riachtanach chun comhionannas a sholáthair, a chur ar an mhéar fhada, de thairbhe sriantachtaí buiséid. Ní seo an t-am le hinfheistíocht chaipitil i mbonneagar don Iarthar a chosc: tá an gníomh dearfach buailte linn.

Tá súil agam gurb é a bheidh i mo thuarascáil ná ghlaao ar an Rialtas chun gníomhú, agus orthu siúd uile ar mór acu marthanas an Iarthair agus comhionannas idir na réigiúin fud fad na hÉireann. Má ghlacann an Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Ealaíona, Spórt, Turasóireacht, Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta leis, tá sé mar rún agam lena chinntiú go gcuirtear na moltaí i bhfeidhm.

Tá mé ag iarraidh, i ndiaidh di bheith glactha, go scaipfear an tuarascáil seo ar gach Aire Rialtais agus ar a ranna agus ar gach comhlacht bainteach stáit, agus i gceann bliana, go dtiocfaidh an Coiste le chéile chun athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an dul chun cinn déanta ar a mholtaí.

Cuimhnigh arís ar Airteagal 45.2.1 den Bhunreacht 1937 *"Go bhfaighidh na saoránaigh (agus tá ceart acu uile, idir fhear is bean, chun leorshlí bheatha), trína ngairmeacha beatha, caoi chun soláthar réasúnta a dhéanamh do riachtanais a dteaghlach".*

Tá muintir Iarthar na hÉireann i teideal cothroime láimhseála, paireacht rochtana agus cothromaíocht deiseanna.

Foreword by Senator Pearse Doherty, Rapporteur



As a native of West Donegal, I am familiar with the challenges facing my community and my county. I have seen Donegal left behind as state-wide programmes are rolled out by Government departments.

I have also witnessed the withdrawal of vital services, such as local buses that once connected non-urban communities to towns, or post offices that were once the heart beat of our communities. The destruction and collapse of traditional employment sectors, such the textile and fishing industries, coupled with the exodus of small farmers from the land has resulted in depopulation and led to unemployment and poverty.

The current recession is not new to us in rural Donegal. Job losses, service cuts, infrastructural under-investment and youth emigration have been the life experience of many generations. However, this is not just the story of Donegal: it is the history of people from the Beara Peninsula to Inishowen, a tale of communities fighting against their extinction, for their very survival.

Travelling throughout the West, particularly when I stood for the European elections in 2004, I was struck by the similarities between other coastal communities and my own area. The individuals and groups I have met, then and since, have reinforced my view that the West of Ireland is facing death by a thousand cuts.

Earlier this year, I sat with a proud West of Ireland woman who, after 60 years of her family running the local post office, saw its door locked for the last time. With incomes so low, there was no one to replace her. Another job was lost, another service gone. That same day, three other post offices closed in the West of Ireland. Sadly, such closures are not unique to this sector. Garda stations, corner shops and local pubs, all are suffering the same fate.

Given the rural and sparsely populated nature of the west of Ireland, and the isolation experienced by many, communities frequently feel helpless in their ability to halt the decline. Their voices are not being heard in the corridors of power. Their lobbies are too weak to exert the pressure that is needed to bring about change. In many cases, these areas find themselves pitted against each other in an "either or" battle to retain services or attract investment.

I was privileged to meet some of the wonderful people living there who work night and day to advocate on behalf of their communities. Without their efforts the situation would be far worse. Unfortunately much more is required. They urgently need high-level intervention if their development programmes and local area plans are to become a reality.

I believe the time has now come for West of Ireland communities, business groups, sporting organisations, workers, farmers, fishermen and elected representatives to come together to agree a common platform for the redevelopment of our region. I believe that if we come together, we can bring about change in government policy, we can turn the tide and ensure a viable future for our communities. This report is an attempt to start this process.

Work started on this document many months ago in towns and villages across the West of Ireland when I sat down and talked and listened to dozens of community groups, trade unions, local businesses, chambers of commerce, enterprise boards and officials in state agencies with a responsibility for delivering jobs and services across the Western seaboard. I wanted to hear at first hand the views of people who deal with the economic and social challenges faced by these communities every day of the week. I want to thank all those who took the time to meet with me and who assisted in the drawing up of this report. It is my intention to return to each

and every one of these communities in the coming months to discuss how we make its recommendations a reality.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, who saw the pressing need for a report of this kind, and appointed me to act as rapporteur.

‘Awakening the West’ is, I believe, the first report of its kind in several decades to deal in depth with the issues raised by geographic inequality.

This report’s twelve chapters set out in detail the current economic, political, social and cultural situation across the Western seaboard region in terms of:

- ✦ **Population trends and community life;**
- ✦ **Physical infrastructure;**
- ✦ **Economy and enterprise development;**
- ✦ **Social services, including health and education;**
- ✦ **Social inclusion;**
- ✦ **The islands and the Gaeltacht;**
- ✦ **Political and state structures.**

Each section examines, in some detail, the current status quo in Western communities. It looks at the impact of government policies on existing development and makes recommendations where necessary, designed to achieve fairness and equality for the West.

‘Awakening the West’ demonstrates that regional inequality is pervasive and multi-layered. The gap between East and West is most stark when regional comparisons in infrastructure are made. Whether it is rail, road, broadband, gas, or electricity, the West lags far behind the East in terms of infrastructural development and this has had a devastating impact on job creation and the maintenance of rural communities. There is no equivalent to a Dublin/ Belfast corridor in the West. As I write, the timescales for the completion of the Atlantic Road Corridor and the Western Rail Corridor are receding and indeed, the future of both of these critically important projects looks uncertain.

While historically the economic development of the East and particularly, of Dublin and Belfast, could be explained by their proximity to Britain and to their status as port cities, there can be no justification for the continuing discrimination against the Western seaboard in modern Ireland.

The rural West has been losing population at an alarming rate due to the decline of traditional employment in farming and fishing. In recent times these areas relied too heavily on employment from construction: they are now suffering disproportionately from the dramatic downturn in that sector.

While there is some recognition of geographic inequality in relation to the economy, regional inequity in relation to public services remains unacknowledged. There can be no sustainable economic progress, however, without the bedrock that social services provide.

Rural communities in the West of Ireland have endured the loss of vital health services, post office closures and the downgrading of Garda services. There is a systematic undermining of our public hospitals. Our smaller hospitals are no longer viewed by the government as providing life and death services, but as ‘wasting resources’ that could otherwise be used by larger urban hospitals - mostly located on the East coast.

Economic and social inequalities lead ultimately to the death of communities. The inability of non-urban communities to retain their graduates is a particular problem. The lack of fit between educational achievement and economic opportunity is a continuing difficulty.

Even when students in the West excel, they lose out. Some of the highest levels of second level educational achievement and third level enrolment are to be found in western counties. However, only 38% of Western graduates find their first employment in their home counties compared to 80% of Eastern graduates. This is a clear indictment of the state’s failure to cherish all of our young people equally.

The establishment of the Western Development Commission was an acknowledgement by government of the need for state intervention to ensure balanced regional development between East and West. Today, as the findings of this report so clearly demonstrate, there is need for fundamental changes in policies and practices in relation to the West of Ireland on the part of both government and state.

I do not claim that this report provides all of the answers to all of the challenges faced by communities across the Western seaboard, but if the recommendations are delivered, it will mark a significant step forward. While I acknowledge that some of the problems highlighted are universal, I would argue

that they are most acutely felt in the West due to decades of poor policy-making and inaction.

The sense of frustration at the failure of successive governments to address the disparities between East and West was palpable at meetings which I held across each of the 10 counties. Eastern-based media, academic, and political commentary has often sought to characterise these views as “perceptions”. This report clearly demonstrates, however, that regional inequality is a harsh reality.

It is unacceptable for Government to put infrastructure projects essential to delivering regional parity on the long finger, due to budgetary constraints. This is not a time to freeze capital investment in infrastructure for the West: this is a time for positive action.

I hope my report will serve as a call to action to the Government and, by extension, to all those who care about the survival of the West and equality between the regions across Ireland. If adopted by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, I intend to ensure that its recommendations are implemented.

I have endeavoured to provide an Irish language version of the report, however, due to time constraints I was only able to have the foreword, introduction, key messages, key recommendations and the Islands and Gaeltacht chapters translated. As the report addresses the needs of a large number of Irish speakers, I am proposing that there should be a full translation of the report upon its acceptance by the Joint Committee.

I am requesting that, upon adoption, this report be circulated to all Government Ministers and their departments and to all relevant state bodies, and that, one year from now, the Committee meet to review the progress made on its recommendations.

Let us recall Article 45.2.1 of the 1937 Constitution *“that the citizens (all of whom, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood) may through their occupations find the means of making reasonable provision for their domestic needs”*.

The people of the West of Ireland deserve fairness of treatment, uniformity of access and equality of opportunity. Justice demands no less.

Acknowledgements

The Report acknowledges the research jointly undertaken by Ruadhán Mac Aodháin and Pádraig MacLochlainn and the significant contribution which they both made to this report. The material and research carried out by both authors was based on the oral contributions and written submissions of a number of groups and organisations. We are indebted to these organisations and included below are the names of all the organisations who contributed to the Report. The Report also acknowledges the contributions of Marie O'Connor, health analyst and author; and Brian Guckian, transport researcher; both of whom gave invaluable material and advice on complex policy areas.

List of organisations

West Cork local business association
'Ripple' Quays regeneration project
West Cork IFA
Island Irish language College
Island Co-op
Special Educational Needs Parents Group
Bring Back Swansea-Cork Ferry Campaign
Kerry County Enterprise Board
Kerry County Development Board
Kerry North Kerry Together
Kerry LEADER
Shannon Development Company
Kerry Chambers of Commerce
Clare IFA Regional Director
Ennis Hospital Action Group
Galway Chamber of Commerce
Galway County Council
Gallimh le Gailge
Conradh na Gaeilge, Gallimh
Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann
Comhair Chumann Árann
Roscommon Western Development Commission
BMW (Border, Midlands, Western) Regional Assembly
Mayo County Council
Mayo Family and Community Resource Centre
Mayo Quayside Development Project
Mayo Westport Youth Activities
Mayo Westport Family & Community Resource Centre

Mayo Community Transport Initiative
Mayo Community Platform
Mayo Age Action
Mayo Intercultural Community Platform
Mayo 'The Cove' Youth Café
Mayo Chamber of Commerce
Mayo Disability Group
Leitrim County Council
Leitrim County Development Board
Leitrim Integrated Development Group
Leitrim Partnership Group
North Leitrim Men's Group
North Leitrim Community Forum
Carrick-on-Shannon Chamber of Commerce
Sligo Chamber of Commerce
Sligo County Council
Sligo Community Platform
Sligo LEADER
Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
Donegal County Council
Donegal SIPTU representative, Martin O'Rourke
Inisowen Development Partnership, Carndonagh and Buncrana
Letterkenny Community Development Project
Muintearas, Community Projects Co. Donegal
McNutts of Downings, textile business
West on Track
Joe Desmond
Irish Post Masters Union
Sinn Féin West of Ireland Committee
Minister Conor Murphy, Department of Regional Development
The Department of Transport
Enterprise Ireland

Introduction

The objective of this report is to identify the social and economic needs of the western coastal counties. In discussing the economic and social needs, comparisons have been made with other regions which have highlighted disparities and inequalities in every area covered by the report. While geographic inequalities in the economy are recognised by the State, there is a continued prioritisation of the more economically developed eastern coast. There is no recognition, however, of geographic inequalities in public services, in access to health care, education or public transport. Rather than addressing inequalities, Government policy has had the effect of exacerbating social inequities. As well as driving public hospitals closures, the State is ignoring the erosion of public amenities, such as post offices and Garda stations, in rural areas and allowing transport and education to continue to be significantly underfunded. State policy makers have failed to recognise the correlation between public social services and economic development. Unless current state policies are fundamentally changed, there will be serious economic and social consequences in the future.

The report is divided into twelve chapters: an overview of the Western seaboard region and a discussion of physical infrastructure; an analysis of the Western economy and enterprise development; access to social services, including health and education; finally, an examination of the islands and the Gaeltacht is followed by a discussion of institutional reform. Each section deals with a number of subjects, which are discussed using statistics and data, submissions from individual groups and organisations; and secondary material. The report uses data based on the Western region (Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal), individual county statistics and, in some circumstances, statistics for the Border Midlands and Western region (BMW).

The region identified by 'Awakening the West' is the Western seaboard region. This consists of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, West Cork and West Limerick. We believe based on the similar geographic, economic and social characteristics of these counties that they should be treated as one region, with sub-regions of the North-West (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim) West (Galway, Roscommon, Mayo) and South-West (West Limerick, Clare, West Cork and Kerry). To achieve more balanced regional development a new

set of regions is preferable as opposed to the current Border, Midlands and Western region and the Southern and Eastern region.

The findings of the report have led to a number of recommendations. A list of key recommendations is given at the beginning of the report, while the complete list of recommendations is found in Appendix 2. These involve varying levels of state investment in both the short and long term. In the current economic climate, such recommendations may be questioned by those who want to see the government continue with the same failed approach. However, without state investment to rebalance the salient inequalities, the Western coast is likely to suffer more hardship in the current economic downturn, and will continue to be less well equipped to recover. The recurring problems of graduate retention, for example, which the report highlights, can only get worse unless remedial action is taken. The Report urges action on all fronts. While it cannot deal with every aspect of economic and social development for the Western seaboard counties, it is hoped that the key issues have been covered comprehensively and that meaningful and sustainable proposals have been made.

Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

BMW region: The Border Midlands and Western region consists of the Border counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Monaghan, Cavan, Louth; the Midland counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath; and Western counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.

ESF: The European Social Fund, the European Union's main financial instrument for investing in employment and education and in developing the skills of citizens of EU member states.

EIB: The European Investment Bank. It supports the EU's policy objectives, in particular, the economic development of the Union's less developed regions, including the improvement of transport and telecommunications infrastructure.

ESRI: The Economic and Social Research Centre. An independent non profit body, which works to increase knowledge of social and economic conditions, conducting research with particular reference to Ireland.

IDA Ireland: Industrial Development Agency, which convinces new international manufacturing and internationally traded service companies to invest in Ireland, and encourages the expansion of such companies already located in Ireland, within the context of regional industrial development.

GDA: Greater Dublin Area, which includes the city of Dublin and its surrounding counties, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Kildare, Meath, South Dublin and Wicklow.

GVA: Gross Value Added, which is an economic measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area or sector of an economy.

MANs: Metropolitan Area Networks, large computer networks usually spanning a city or town that typically use wireless infrastructure or optical fiber connections to link their sites. These networks are being installed in cities and towns in Ireland in two phases.

NDP: National Development Plans typically provide for a six-year period of government investment for the development of economic and social infrastructure in 26 counties of Ireland. The current National Development Plan 2007-2013, which succeeds the NDP 2000-2006, provides for €54.6 billion investment in economic infrastructure and €49.6 billion investment in social infrastructure.

NBS: National Broadband Scheme. Announced in May 2007 to provide broadband connection to areas which are currently unconnected. The scheme will operate on the basis of a single tender.

NSS: The National Spatial Strategy. A planning framework which sets out to achieve more balanced social, economic and physical development through more effective planning. The strategy designated four new 'gateways', large economic centres designed to support the growth and development of nine medium-sized 'hubs', or smaller towns.

NUTS: Nomenclature of Territorial Units. Established to provide a geographic basis for the production of regional statistics for the European Union. NUTS 2 consists of the BMW region (see above) and the South and East region (see below). NUTS 3 consists of Dublin, South-East, South-West, Mid-West, Mid-East, West, and Border Regions. Although the NUTS classification has no legal standing, these geographic divisions have been used since 1988 in European law specifying the tasks of European Union Structural Funds.

S&E region: The Southern and Eastern region, which consists of Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin (Dublin Region); Carlow, Tipperary South Riding, Waterford City and County, Wexford, Kilkenny (South-East Region); Cork City and County, Kerry (South-West Region); Clare, Limerick City and County, Tipperary N.R. (Mid-West Region); Kildare, Meath, Wicklow (Mid-East Region).

Single Farm Payment: A grant deriving from the Common Agriculture Policy which is calculated by dividing the relevant amount of payment by the number of eligible hectares (including forage area) in the relevant year.

WDC: The Western Development Commission. A statutory body set up to promote economic growth and integrated development in counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo and Clare.

Western seaboard region: Counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, West Cork and West Limerick

Achoimire Feidhmiúcháin

Forbhreathnú

- ♦ Ar bhord farraige an iarthair, idir Dún na nGall agus Ciarraí agus Iarthar Chorcaí, tá pobail ag troid le maireachtáil. Bhí beartas rialtais i bhfabhar ar bhonn forghníomhach cósta thoir na tíre maidir le bonneagar, le cruthú fostaíochta agus le tionchar polaitiúil de.
- ♦ Is aidhm don tuarascáil seo riachtanais eacnamaíocha agus shóisialta Iarthar na hÉireann a aimsiú – Dún na nGall, Sligeach, Liatroim, Ros Comáin, Gaillimh, Maigh Eo, an Clár, Ciarraí, Iarthar Chorcaí agus Iarthar Luimnigh – agus moltaí a thabhairt chun tosaigh i gcóir athfhorbairt an Iarthair.
- ♦ Nochtadh éagothromaíochtaí idir cóstaí an oirthir agus an iarthair i ngach réimse sa tuarascáil. Cé gurb iad an tearcmhaoiniú agus an neamart le fada is cúis leis an éagothromaíocht faoi láthair, tugann an rialtas tús áite go fóill do chósta an oirthir.
- ♦ Níltear ag tabhairt faoi bhanú na tuaithe. Laistigh den Iarthar, bhí gluaisteacht shuntasach daoine idir pobail tuaithe agus ionaid uirbeacha de réir mar a aistarraingíodh seirbhísí éigeantacha agus gur laghdaíodh deiseanna fostaíochta. Idir 1926 agus 2002 thit daonra na gceantar sin i gClár, i gCorcaigh, i nDún na nGall, i gCiarraí, i Liatroim, i Luimneach, i Maigh Eo, i Ros Comáin agus i Sligeach atá curtha san áireamh sa gclár 'Clár' ó 892,632 go 534,439. Is laghdú de 40.1% é sin.
- ♦ Is ceantar tuaithe é go príomha réigiún an iarthair, agus tá 67.8% den daonra iomlán ina gcónaí lasmuigh de na hionaid daonra ina bhfuil 1,500 duine nó níos mó ann.

Athchóiriú Struchtúrach

- ♦ Is é a chuir leis an éagothromaíocht faoi láthair idir na réigiúin ná struchtúrú forais stáit agus soláthar beartais phoiblí. Is teoranta é an comhordú beartais réigiúnaigh agus ní chuirtear go leor béime ar spriocanna sa Straitéis Spáis Náisiúnta.
- ♦ Níl ann difríocht shuntasach ann do gheataí ná do mhoil mar a chuirtear síos orthu sa Straitéis Spáis Náisiúnta mar gheall ar a stádas nua. Tá na bailte margaidh agus an tuath i gcoitinne thíos leis mar

gheall ar easpa airde sa Straitéis Spáis Náisiúnta í féin agus i mbeartais eile rialtais.

- ♦ Rinne an rialtas neamart i dtábhacht seirbhísí áitiúla chun tacú le tarraingteacht iomlán na réigiún ar mhaithe le forbairt eacnamaíochta agus cruthú fostaíochta.
- ♦ Tá cur chuige ró-láraithe ag leibhéal an stáit, agus tá údarais laga áitiúla ann.
- ♦ Tá tionchar teoranta ag comhairlí áitiúla ar bheartas poiblí amhail iompar, oideachas agus sláinte.

Fostaíocht agus Fiontraíocht

- ♦ Tá baint ag 20% den fhostaíocht iomlán ar fud réigiún an iarthair le talmhaíocht, le foraoiseach, le hiascaireacht agus le tógáil. Tá deacrachtaí móra ag gach ceann de na hearnálacha seo faoi láthair.
- ♦ D'imir an cor chun donais sa mhargadh réadmhaoine tionchar ollmhór ar an tionscal tógála: idir Eanáir 2008 agus Lúnasa 2008, ba í an tógáil an tsainchatagóir is mó faoina raibh daoine ag clárú leis an gclár beo.
- ♦ Tá meánioncam feirme i contaetha chósta an iarthair thíos faoin gcuid eile den tír, agus tá tromlach na bhfeirmeoirí san Iarthar ag fáil Aoníocaíocht Feirme ag an ráta is ísle.
- ♦ Sa bhliain 2007, ní raibh ach 2,400 duine fostaíthe go díreach leis an iascaireacht. Tá trí cheathrú den fhórsa oibre iomlán iascaireachta lonnaithe sna contaetha a leanas: Dún na nGall, Ciarraí, Gaillimh, Maigh Eo, an Clár agus Iarthar Chorcaí. Mheath an ghabháil iomlán a fuair cabhlaigh Éireannacha ó 390,000 tonna sa bhliain 1995 go 210,000 sa bhliain 2006. Ó bhí 1993 ann tá meath 30% ar an gcabhlach Éireannach.
- ♦ Sa bhliain 2007, ní raibh ach 745 (8.1%) de na 9,216 post nua cruthaithe i ngnólachtaí tacaithe ag IDA lonnaithe sna contaetha a leanas, Dún na nGall, Liatroim, Sligeach, Maigh Eo, Ros Comáin, an Clár, Luimneach nó Ciarraí. Cé gurb iad Gaillimh agus Corcaí is cúis le 1,905 (21%) de na poist nua cruthaithe sa bhliain 2007, bhí tromlach mór na bpost seo cnuasaithe i ngeataí chathair na Gaillimhe agus chathair Chorcaí.
- ♦ Sa bhliain 2006 ní raibh ach 10.6% de mhaoiniú taighde dáilte ar an Iarthar, agus fuair Ollscoil

Naisiúnta na hÉireann tromlach na hinfheistíochta sin.

- ✦ Tá fadhb mhór coinneála do chéimithe ann. Ní bhfuair ach 38% de chéimithe réigiún an iarthair a gcéad áit fostaíochta ina gcontaetha dúchais i gcomparáid le 79.5% do chéimithe Bhaile Átha Cliath.
- ✦ Tá an céatadán daoine atá i mbaol bochtanais agus i mbochtanas comhsheasmhach níos airde i ngach contae ar bhord farraige an iarthair beagnach, ná i gcontaetha an oirthir.
- ✦ Bhí laghdú 30% ar líon na gcuariteoirí a tháinig thar sáile anall chuig an Iarthuaisceart ó bhí 1999 ann. Sa bhliain 2006, ní raibh ach 9% den ioncam foriomlán turasóireachta saothraithe ag an gClár, Maigh Eo, Ros Comáin, Liatroim, Sligeach agus Dún na nGall.
- ✦ Cé go meallann Iardheisceart na hÉireann go hiondúil líon mór turasóirí, meastar, le clabhsúr seirbhís farantóireachta idir Corcaigh agus Swansea i mí Eanáir 2008, gur chaill an réigiún €35 milliún cheana d'ioncam turasóirí.

Bonneagar

- ✦ Is é an bac is lárnaí ar fhorbairt eacnamaíochta agus ar rochtain ar sheirbhísí in Iarthar na hÉireann ná an bonneagar lag. Bhí caiteachas bóithre don tréimhse seacht mbliana go dtí deireadh 2006 i réigiún na Teorann, Lár Tíre agus an Iarthair (BMW) ná 82% de chaiteachas pleanáilte sa PFN i gcomparáid le 120% don Deisceart agus don Oirthear.
- ✦ Ar na 19 dtionscadal bóithre idir lámha ag deireadh mhí na Nollag 2007, ní raibh ach dhá cheann lonnaithe i réigiún bhord farraige an iarthair, is é sin 75 km as 458 km de bhóithre naisiúnta.
- ✦ Ní raibh ach 9% den bhuiséad foriomlán iompair phoiblí tugtha do réigiún na Teorann, Lár Tíre agus an Iarthair, leis an 91% eile do réigiún an Deiscirt agus an Oirthir. Is é an toradh atá air sin nach n-úsáideann ach 2.3% de dhaoine i réigiún an iarthair busanna poiblí nó traenacha le taisteal ar obair.
- ✦ Tá éagothromaíochtaí praghaís in iompar poiblí idir réigiún an iarthair agus mórcheantar Bhaile Átha Cliath: Tá Má Nuad go Baile Átha Cliath 50% níos saoire ná an tseirbhís idir Baile an Mhóta agus Sligeach, d'ainneoin an dá thuras bheith ar comhfhad, a bheag nó a mhór.
- ✦ I gcodarsnacht leis an PFN 2000-2006, níl briseadh

síos réigiúnach den chaiteachas atá beartaithe faoin bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta nua.

- ✦ Sa bhliain 2006 ní raibh teacht ar leathanbhanda ach ag 12.7% de theaghaigh i réigiún an iarthair. D'ainneoin na bhfeabhsaithe le dhá bhliain anuas tá rochtain faoi mheán an AE atá ag 20%. Is é easpa leathanbhanda is cúis le cuideachtaí ag aistriú chuig ceantair atá níos uirbí.
- ✦ Is é Dorchala Iarnróid an Iarthair an t-aon mhórhionscadal iarnróid idir-réigiúnach do chontaetha an iarthair faoi Transport 21 agus atá anois i mbaol mar gheall ar chiorruithe rialtais. Beidh costas níos lú ná 200 milliún euro ar Bhealach Iarnróid an Iarthair, i gcomparáid le níos mó na trí bhilliún euro don Metro ó Thuaidh i mBaile Átha Cliath.

Rochtain ar sheirbhísí agus cuimsiú sóisialta

- ✦ Chuaigh rochtain ar sheirbhísí sóisialta ar gcúl le deich mbliana anuas ar fud cheantair thuaithe na hÉireann. Tá éagothromaíochtaí geografacha agus sóisialta i dtorthaí sláinte, tá soláthar seirbhísí agus rochtain ar chúram sláinte faoi cheilt go fóill, agus é mar chúlra dofheicthe don bheartas stáit.
- ✦ Ní dháiltear maoiniú sláinte go cothrom in Éirinn trasna na réigiúin. Ní mór d'Éirinn foirmle mhaoinithe sláinte a sholáthar chun níos mó cothromaíochta idir na réigiúin a chur i gcrích.
- ✦ D'fhéadfaí clabhsúr aonad cnáimhseachais bheith ina thuar do chlabhsúr ospidéal iomláin: sin mar atá idirspéachas seirbhísí ospidéal gur dócha má dhúntar roinn amháin go ndúnfaí seirbhísí eile.
- ✦ Má chuirtear tuarascáil Hanly i bhfeidhm ina hiomláine, is é a tharlóidh ná go ndúnfar 13 dár n-ospidéal san Iarthar.
- ✦ Tá sé fortheilgthe faoin mbliain 2014 go mbeidh dúnadh breise 1698 leaba in ospidéal phoiblí ar bhord farraige an iarthair faoi réir 'Cás Réigiúnaithe' an rialtais.
- ✦ Tá cúram aille á fhorbairt ar chaoi a méadófaí éagothromaíochtaí réigiúnacha atá ann cheana.
- ✦ Beidh ospidéal phoiblí i Sligeach, i gCaisleán an Bharraigh agus i dTrá Lí díchoibhsaithe agus íosghrádaithe dá gcuirfí an straitéis náisiúnta um chúram aille i bhfeidhm mar atá beartaithe.
- ✦ Mheas tuarascáil le déanaí dar teideal 'A study on the effects of the community childcare subvention

scheme' go n-ardófar táillí cúram leanaí le idir 50% agus 166% thar chostais sa bhliain 2007.

- ✦ As na 396 iarratas ó bhunscoileanna sna contaetha a leanas Ciarraí, Corcaigh, an Clár, Gaillimh, Ros Comáin, Maigh Eo, Liatroim, agus Dún na nGall ní dheachaigh ach 72 (18%) níos faide ná na céimeanna tosaigh.
- ✦ Sna contaetha a leanas Corcaigh, Ciarraí, an Clár, Gaillimh, Ros Comáin i leathchuid de na stáisiúin Ghardaí níl ach Garda ámhain ag feidhmiú ar bhonn paistaimseartha. Go minic bíonn stáisiúin Ghardaí dúnta ar an Domhnach agus bíonn uaireanta oscailte i rith na seachtaine teoranta go dtí idir 10am agus 1pm.
- ✦ Dúnadh 344 oifig poist idir 2001 agus 2008 agus cuid mhaith acu íosghradaithe. Tharla a thromlach i réigiún bhord farraige an iarthair. I nDún na nGall féin, idir 1999 agus 2006 dúnadh 11 oifig poist agus íosghrádaíodh 15 eile. Ba mhór an brú ar phobail áitiúla mar gheall air sin.
- ✦ Tá na haoisphróifílí is sine sa stát i réigiúin an Iarthair, na Teorann agus an Iardheiscirt. Is é an toradh atá air sin ná go bhfuil spleáchas aoise níos airde i gcontaetha amhail Dún na nGall, Ros Comáin, Liatroim agus Maigh Eo. I ndaonáireamh 1996, ba i Liatroim a bhí an céatadán is airde daonra a raibh aois 65 agus níos sine acu, is é sin 15.7%.

Na hOileáin

- ✦ Tá 33 oileán a bhfuil cónaí orthu ar chósta iarthar na hÉireann. D'ainneoin móriarrachtaí na n-oileánach, tá meathlú go fóill ar dhaonra na nOileán.
- ✦ Is é an dúshlán is mó atá roimh na hOileáin ná daoine óga a choinneáil. Is é atá ag teastáil ná dianchur chuige ón rialtas chun rochtain ar na hoileáin agus deiseanna fostaíochta a fheabhsú agus soláthar bunseirbhísí sóisialta a ráthú.

An Ghaeltacht

- ✦ De réir na mionsonraí a thiomsaigh Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta na hÉireann nach bhfuil ach aon cheathrú de na teaghlaigh sa Ghaeltacht a bhfuil Gaeilge líofa acu.
- ✦ Téann 46% de leanaí atá ar aois scoile i gceantair Ghaeltachta ar scoil gan aon líofacht Gaeilge acu.
- ✦ Tá cainteoirí Gaeilge ag taisteal ón nGaeltacht amach le teacht ar obair agus ar sheirbhísí atá lonnaithe i mbailte lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.

Tá tionchar dochrach ag an easpa fostaíochta agus seirbhísí sa Ghaeltacht ar thimpeallacht shochtheangeolaíoch na gceantar Gaeltachta.

- ✦ Sa bhliain 2007, cailleadh aon phost as gach ocht i gcuideachtaí cuidithe ag Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- ✦ Má táthar chun ceantair Ghaeltachta a chothabháil ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar phríomhtheanga iontu agus má táthar chun ceantair Ghaeltachta atá anois dátheangach nó a bhfuil an Béarla i réim iontu a athbheochan, ní mór meicníochtaí reachtúla a bheith ann chun idirdhealú a dhéanamh idir ceantair Ghaeltachta agus chun pleanáil teanga a fhorbairt bunaithe ar riachtanais dhifriúla theangeolaíocha na gceantar Gaeltachta.

Executive Summary

Overview

- ✦ Along the Western seaboard, from Donegal to Kerry and West Cork, communities are fighting for their very survival. Government policy has pro-actively favoured the east coast of the country in infrastructure, job creation and political influence.
- ✦ The purpose of this report is to identify the social and economic needs of the West of Ireland – Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, West Cork and West Limerick – and bring forward proposals for the redevelopment of the West.
- ✦ Disparities between the east and west coasts have surfaced in every area covered by the report. While historically, underinvestment and neglect are among the main reasons for the current imbalance, government policy continues to prioritise the east coast.
- ✦ Depopulation in rural communities is going untackled. Within the West there has been a substantial movement of people from rural communities to urban centres as essential services have been withdrawn and job opportunities have been reduced. Between 1926 and 2002 the population of those areas within Clare, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo that are included in the Clár programme fell from 892,632 to 534,439. That is a 40.1% decline.
- ✦ The western region is predominantly rural, with 67.8% of the total population living outside population centres of 1,500 or more.

Structural Reform

- ✦ The structuring of state institutions and delivery of public policy have contributed to the current inequity between the regions. There is limited regional policy co-ordination and insufficient consideration of the goals of the National Spatial Strategy.
- ✦ Gateways and hubs identified in the National Spatial Strategy have not experienced any material differences as a result of their new status. Market towns and the broader countryside have also

suffered from inadequate attention in the National Spatial Strategy itself and other government policies.

- ✦ Government policy has ignored the importance of local services to the overall attractiveness of regions for economic development and job creation.
- ✦ Local councils have limited influence over public policy areas such as transport, education and health.

Employment and Enterprise

- ✦ Across the western region agriculture, forestry, fishing and construction amount to 20% of all employment. Each of these sectors is undergoing serious difficulties.
- ✦ The downturn in the property market has had a serious impact on the construction industry: between January 2008 and August 2008, construction represented the single largest defined category of people signing on to the live register.
- ✦ Average farm income in western coastal counties is below that of the rest of the country, while most western farmers are in receipt of a Single Farm Payment at the lowest rates.
- ✦ In 2007, only 2,400 people were directly employed in fishing. Three quarters of the entire fishing workforce is located in counties Donegal, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Clare and West Cork. The total catch for Irish fleets has declined from 390,000 tonnes in 1995 to 210,000 tonnes in 2006. Since 1993 the Irish fleet has declined by over 30%.
- ✦ In 2007, just 745 (8.1%) of the 9,216 new jobs created in IDA-supported firms were located in counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Clare, Limerick or Kerry. While Galway and Cork accounted for 1,905 (21%) of new jobs created in 2007, the vast bulk of these jobs were concentrated in the gateways of Galway city and Cork city.
- ✦ In 2006 only 10.6% of research funding was allocated to the West, with National University Ireland Galway receiving the lion's share of investment.
- ✦ There is a serious problem of graduate retention. Only 38% of the western region's graduates find their first place of employment in their home

counties in comparison with 79.5% for Dublin.

- ✦ The percentage of people at risk of poverty and in consistent poverty is higher in almost all Western seaboard counties than in eastern counties.
- ✦ Strengthening the all-Ireland economy involves reducing and removing obstacles to cross border trade including working mobility and harmonising of fiscal and legislative policy are vital to the development of a prosperous and equal economy.
- ✦ Since 1995 cross border trade has increased by €1bn, with a 20% increase in the last three years.
- ✦ The North-West has suffered a decline of 30% in overseas visitors since 1999. In 2006, Clare, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal generated just 9% of the overall tourism revenue.
- ✦ While the South-West of Ireland has traditionally attracted a large number of tourists, the closure of the Cork to Swansea ferry service in January 2008 is estimated to have already cost the region €35 million in tourism revenue.

Infrastructure

- ✦ Weak infrastructure is a central barrier to economic development and access to services in the West of Ireland. Road expenditure for the seven-year period up to the end of 2006 in the Border, Midlands and Western region was 82% of the spending planned in the National Development Plan, in comparison to 120% for the South and East.
- ✦ Of the 19 national road projects in construction at the end of December 2007, just two were located in the Western seaboard region, amounting to 75 out of 458 kilometres of national roads.
- ✦ In the overall public transport budget in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, only 9% was allocated to the Border Midlands, and Western region, with the remaining 91% for the South and East regions. The result is that only 2.3% of people in the western region use public bus or trains to get to work.
- ✦ Price discrepancies in public transport exist between the western region and the greater Dublin area: Maynooth to Dublin is 50% cheaper than the Ballymote to Sligo service, despite both journeys being almost the same distance.
- ✦ In contrast to the National Development Plan 2000-2006, the government has no regional breakdown of planned spending under the new National Development Plan.

- ✦ In 2006 only 12.7% of households in the western region had broadband access. Despite improvements in the past two years, penetration remains below the EU average of 20%. The lack of broadband in rural areas has forced companies to relocate to more urban areas.
- ✦ The Western Rail Corridor is the only major inter-regional rail project for the western counties under Transport 21 and is now at risk due to government cutbacks. The Western Rail Corridor will cost less than 200 million euro, compared to the Metro North in Dublin, which is estimated to cost €3.7billion.

Access to essential services and social inclusion

- ✦ Access to social services has regressed in recent decades throughout rural Ireland. Geographic and social inequalities in health outcomes, service provision and healthcare access remain hidden, forming an invisible backdrop to state policy.
- ✦ Health funding in Ireland is inequitably distributed across the regions. Ireland needs to produce a health funding formula to deliver greater regional equality.
- ✦ Full implementation of the Hanly Report will lead to the closure of around 13 hospitals in the Western Region. Up to 8 A&E public hospital departments, two inpatient maternity facilities and 12 inpatient psychiatric units are set to close.
- ✦ Up to two thousand acute public hospital beds in the West are earmarked for closure over the next decade. The PA Report (2008) envisages closing 1,698 public patient beds by 2014, while acute public hospital bed losses under the Hanly Report, excluding inpatient psychiatric and long-stay beds, are estimated at 1,965.
- ✦ These hospital closures will leave hundreds of thousands of people two hours' drive or more from inpatient care. Withdrawing public services, such as hospital A&E and maternity care, will lead to needless deaths and disability and threaten the social and economic sustainability of communities in the West.
- ✦ Cancer care is being developed in a way that will intensify existing regional imbalances.
- ✦ Public hospitals such as those in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee face destabilisation and downgrading if the national cancer care strategy is implemented as planned.

- ✦ A recent report entitled '*A study on the effects of the community childcare subvention scheme*' estimated that the change in government policy will see childcare fees rise by between 50% and 166% over costs in 2007.
- ✦ Of the 396 applications from primary schools in counties Kerry, Cork, Clare, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal, only 72 (18%) have progressed beyond initial stages.
- ✦ In counties Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway and Roscommon nearly half of all Garda stations are reduced to one Garda operating on a part-time basis. In many instances Garda stations are closed on Sundays while opening hours during the week are limited to between 10am and 1pm.
- ✦ Between 2001 and 2008 344 post offices have been closed, with many more downgraded. The majority of closures have taken place in the Western seaboard region. In Donegal alone, between 1999 and 2006 11 post offices were closed and a further 15 were downgraded. This has been a huge strain on local communities.
- ✦ The West, Border and South-West regions have the oldest age profiles in the state. This results in a higher age dependency in counties such as Donegal, Roscommon, Leitrim and Mayo. In the 1996 census, Leitrim had the highest percentage of its population aged 65 and over, at 15.7%.
- ✦ Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas are commuting to towns located outside of the Gaeltacht for work and to access services. The lack of employment and services in the Gaeltacht is adversely affecting the socio-linguistic environment of Gaeltacht areas.
- ✦ In 2007, one in eight jobs were lost in Údrarás na Gaeltachta assisted companies.
- ✦ To sustain Gaeltacht areas where Irish is the predominant language and to revive Gaeltacht areas which have become bilingual or where English is the ascendancy, there must be statutory mechanisms to distinguish between Gaeltacht areas and the development of language planning based on the different linguistic needs of Gaeltacht areas.

The Islands

- ✦ There are 33 inhabited islands off the west coast of Ireland. Despite the huge efforts of islanders, the population of the Islands continues to decline.
- ✦ The greatest single challenge for the Islands is to retain young people. Addressing this challenge will require an intensive approach from the government as there will need to be improved access to the Islands and employment opportunities and guaranteed provision of basic social services.

An Ghaeltacht

- ✦ According to data compiled by the Irish Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, only one quarter of households in Gaeltacht areas possess a fluency in Irish.
- ✦ 46% of school-going children in Gaeltacht areas are starting school without any fluency in the language

Eochairmholtaí

Forbhreathnú

Is mór an acmhainn atá i gcontaetha ar bhord farraige an iarthair. Tá pobal ardoilte ann a bhfuil taithí láidir acu ar fhiontraíocht agus ar nuáil, tá sé ag croílár thionscal iascaireachta na tíre, agus is limistéar áilleachta nádúrtha é a bhfuil acmhainn mhór turasóireachta gan saothrú ann. Ach mura dtagann an mhuintir san iarthar le chéile agus labhairt d'aonghuth leanfaidh an rialtas air ag cur riachtanais an iarthair ar gcúl riachtanais an Deiscirt agus an Oirthir. Is féidir iarthar na hÉireann a atógáil má tá cur chuige nua polaitiúil ann agus má chuirtear i bhfeidhm na bearta liostaithe thíos.

Athchóiriú Struchtúrach

- ✦ Ba chóir freagracht fhoriomlán a thabhairt don Roinn Comhshaoil maidir le forbairt réigiúnach agus an t-ainm nua an Roinn Comhshaoil agus Forbartha Réigiúnaí a thabhairt uirthi. Ba iad na téarmaí tagartha a bheadh aici ná comhairle a chur ar ranna agus ar ghníomhaireachtaí eile i dtaca le beartais réigiúnacha, monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar thionchar beartas naisiúnta, obair go dlúth le tionóil agus le húdaráis réigiúnacha agus comhordú a dhéanamh leis an Roinn Forbartha Réigiúnaí sa Tuisceart.
- ✦ Ba chóir creat Measúnaithe Tionchair ar Fhorbairt Réigiúnach a bhunú sa dlí, chun iallach a chur ar gach comhlacht agus roinn stáit measúnú a dhéanamh ar cé acu a chruthófaí éagothroime réigiúnach mar gheall ar bheartais a bhí á bhforbairt, agus chun na leasa a d'fheadfaí a dhéanamh leagan amach chun forbairt chothrom réigiúnach a chinntiú.
- ✦ Nuair a chreideann duine nó grúpa go n-imreoidh beartas stáit tionchar ar a réigiún, agus forbairt éagothrom réigiúnach ann mar thoradh air, ba chóir go mbeidís in ann gearán a dhéanamh ar an gcéad dul síos leis an stiúrthóir beartais sa roinn faoi chaibidil agus níor mhór dó freagairt a thabhairt laistigh de mhí ó ghearán bheith curtha isteach. Dhéanfaí aon ghearán bhreise leis an gCoimisiún um Chomhionannas, a d'fhéadfadh imscrúdú a thionscnamh le comhoibriú iomlán na roinne.
- ✦ Ba chóir raon táscairí sóisialta agus eacnamaíocha a leagan amach agus a chur i bhfeidhm chun

monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar aschur gach roinn rialtais.

- ✦ Ba chóir Páipéar Bán 1999 ar Fhorbairt Tuaithe a athbhreithniú le gur féidir leis tabhairt faoi fhorbairt eacnamaíoch na mbailte margaidh agus an mhórphobail tuaithe mar is cóir.
- ✦ Ba chóir aird a thabhairt ar thoghcháin dhíreacha a dhéanamh chuig Tionóil Reigiúnacha agus/nó Udaráis Réigiúnacha.
- ✦ Ba chóir plé le contaetha ar bhord farraige an iarthair (Dún na nGall, Sligeach, Liatroim, Ros Comáin, Gaillimh, Maigh Eo, an Clár, Ciarraí, Ciarraí Thiar, agus Luimneach Thiar) mar shainréigiún ina bhfuil fo-réigiúin an lathuaiscirt, an iarthair agus an lardheiscirt ann.
- ✦ Ba chóir mionsonraí sóisialta agus eacnamaíocha a bhailiú agus a fhoilsiú contae ar chontae le gur féidir pleananna a chur in oiriúint do riachtanais na réigiún áirithe maidir le cruthú fostaíochta, le bonneagar agus le soláthar seirbhíse poiblí.

Fostaíocht agus fiontraíocht

- ✦ Ba chóir sprioc-chlár cruthaithe fostaíochta a chur i bhfeidhm trí chlár thógála scoile a sholáthar, trí ghealltanais tithíochta sóisialta agus trí infheistíocht chaipitil i dtionscadail bonneagair bóithre agus iarnród.
- ✦ Ba chóir spriocanna réigiúnacha agus fo-réigiúnacha cruthaithe fostaíochta a leagan d'Fhiontraíocht Éireann, don UFT agus do Ghníomhaireachtaí Tacaíochta Fiontar eile.
- ✦ Ba chóir straitéis a fhorbairt chun tacú le miondíoltóirí áitiúla a choinneáil, lena n-áireofaí bonneagar miondíola áitiúil a fheabhsú, stop a chur le meath gnó miondíola idir bheag agus chuibheasach mar gheall ar ollmhargaí móra i lár cathracha agus bailte.
- ✦ Ba chóir gníomhaireacht stáit fhéinchothabhalach mar a gcéanna le Cuideachta Forbartha na Sionainne, a bhfuil punann réadmhaoine aici, a fhorbairt do na contaetha sa iarthar, san iardheisceart agus san iarthuaisceart chun níos mó gníomhaíocht fiontraíochta ag an leibhéal áitiúil a chur chun cinn

- ✦ Ba chóir straitéis eacnamaíochta ghlas a fhorbairt do réigiún bhord farraige an iarthair chun deiseanna fiontraíochta a fhiosrú maidir le seirbhísí glasa agus le fuinneamh in-athnuaite.
- ✦ Ba chóir d'Fhorfás athbhreithniú láithreach a dhéanamh ar chumas réigiún bhord farraige an iarthair chun Infheistíocht Dhíreach Choigríche (IDC) a mhealladh agus na bearta is gá a dhéanamh ag leibhéal straitéiseach chun a acmhainn iomaíochta a fheabhsú agus chun borradh a chur faoi dheiseanna fostaíochta.
- ✦ Ba chóir Cnuas-Bheartas Réigiúnach do bhord farraige an iarthair a fhorbairt a d'aimseodh earnáil ar leith (mar shampla fuinneamh in-athnuaite) agus moltaí a dhéanamh ar oideachas tríú leibhéal agus ar riachtanais bonneagair fhisicigh chun a leithéid de chnuasaigh a chur chun cinn.
- ✦ Ní mór don rialtas plean Forbartha Eacnamaíochta uile-Éireann a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm le tabhairt faoi easnamh bonneagair, gréasán bóithre agus iarnród uile-Éireann agus acmhainní leathanbhanda go háirithe, agus chun neamhéifeachtacht scála agus dúbláil seirbhísí a laghdú, gníomhaireachtaí rialtais go háirithe.
- ✦ Ba chóir don stát úsáid cistiúchán an AE a uasmhéadú le haghaidh trádála trasteorann agus tabhairt faoi riachtanais le haghaidh straitéis taighde agus forbartha uile-Éireann, agus leis sin cúnamh breise d'fhiontair idir bheag agus chuibheasach mar aon le gnóthaí beaga chun pleananna gnó a fhorbairt maidir le taighde agus forbairt.
- ✦ Ba chóir scéimeanna tacaíochta Bord Fiontar Contae a athbhreithniú le go gcumhdófaí deontais mhéadaithe fostaíochta, deontais stoic, deontais taca sreafa airgid, tacaí éifeachtachta inmheánaí, tacaí forbartha eolais agus cealú riachtanas ciste chomhoiriúnaithe iontu.
- ✦ Ba chóir Scéim Ráthaíochta lasachta arna Maoiniú ag an Stát a fhorbairt i gcomhair leis an mBanc Eorpach Infheistíochta d'fhiontair idir bheag agus chuibheasach ag feidhmiú ar bhord farraige an iarthair le láimhdeachas €5 milliún ar a mhéad. Ba chóir don Bhord Fiontar Contae é sin a riar.
- ✦ Ba chóir spriocanna réigiúnacha, fo-réigiúnacha agus contae a leagan maidir le líon cuairteoirí, caiteachas cuairteora agus maoiniú chun turasóireacht a spreagadh.

- ✦ Ba chóir rannpháirtíochtaí a spreagadh idir institiúidí tríú leibhéal agus campais ghnó amhail an rannpháirtíocht idir Campas Teicneolaíochta Chiarraí agus IT Thrá Lí. Ba chóir scéimeanna socrúcháin d'fho-chéimithe i gcuideachtaí atá lonnaithe i gcontaetha an iarthair a leathnú.
- ✦ Ba chóir tionscadail infheistíochta a fhorbairt chun cumas taighde agus forbartha na nInstitiúidí Teicneolaíochta a neartú, ar aidhm dó íos-spriocanna taighde agus forbartha a leagan amach lena chinntiú go bhfuil níos mó infheistíochta poiblí i dtaighde agus i bhforbairt atá cothrom ar bhonn réigiúnach.
- ✦ Ba chóir a fhiosrú an féidir ollscoil chomhcheangailte an lathuaiscirt a chruthú, agus athghiniúint eacnamaíochta mar chroí-aidhm aici.
- ✦ Ba chóir an clár Mná i mbun Gnó a ritheann na Boird Fiontar Contae a leathnú.

Bonneagar/ Forbairt Chothrom Réigiúnach

- ✦ Ba chóir don Phlean Forbartha Naisiúnta 2007-2013 an beartas a thabhairt isteach arís maidir le sprioc ar leith a bheith aige chun forbairt chothrom réigiúnach a bhaint amach agus spriocanna leagtha do gach réigiún.
- ✦ De réir an dlí, ba chóir don Roinn Iompair Measúnú Tionchair ar Fhorbairt Réigiúnach a fhoilsiú agus í ag tionscnamh agus ag dréachtú beartais um ghréasáin bóithre.
- ✦ Is ríthábhachtach Dorchla Iarnróid an Iarthair (BII) d'fhorbairt an iarthair. Níor chóir go mbeadh sé faoi réir ciorruithe agus ba chóir dul ar aghaidh mar atá beartaithe. Ba chóir athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an bhfad idir Clár Chlainne Mhuiris agus Cúil Mhuine mar ábhar práinne.
- ✦ Ba chóir do Dhorchla Bóthar an Atlantaigh, idir Port Láirge agus Leitir Ceanainn bheith ina dhébhealach leanúnach tógtha le maoiniú poiblí.
- ✦ Ba chóir comhchoiste Oireachtais-Tionóil a bhunú chun torthaí na tuarascála a sholáthróidh an Roinn Forbartha Réigiúnaí sa Tuaisceart ar fhorbairt an ghréasáin iarnród san Iarthuaisceart a imscrúdú. Ba chóir athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an iarnród a mholfar idir Doire agus Leitir Ceanainn leis an líne sínte go Sligeach agus ba chóir athbhreithniú a dhéanamh freisin ar an nasc a mholfar idir an Iarthuaisceart agus Baile Átha Cliath.

- ✦ Ba chóir Dorchla Bhóthar an Atlantaigh a shainiú mar Dhorchla Iompair Inbhuanaithe, a bhfuil forbairt bonneagar bóithre agus iarnróid atá cothrom agus inbhuanaithe in aon phacáiste ámhain.
- ✦ Ba chóir ranna bóithre i gcomhairlí contae a athrú go ranna iompair inbhuanaithe mar gheall ar chúinsí eacnamaíochta agus comhshaoil atá ag athrú.
- ✦ Ba chóir do Chláir Iompar Tuaithe oibriú go dtí teorainneacha contae mar ábhar práinne agus ní laistigh de cheantair nádúrtha iompair.
- ✦ Ba chóir go mbeadh cigireachtaí ar cheantair ina bhfuil sé maíte ag soláthróirí leathanbhanda go bhfuil siad ceangailte ach a d'aimsigh comhairlí áitiúla iad mar limistéir gan cheangal.
- ✦ Ba chóir tacaíocht airgid stáit a thabhairt chun scéimeanna leathanbhanda den chéad ghlúin eile a thriail i dtír bhaile ar a laghad i ngach ceann de na deich gcontae ar bhord farraige an iarthair nuair a éascaíonn bonneagar leathanbhanda a leithéid.
- ✦ Ba chóir don Roinn Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Nádúrtha criosanna fuinnimh in-athnuaite i réigiún bhord farraige an iarthair a aimsiú agus mholtá a thabhairt le haghaidh tionscadail fuinnimh in-athnuaite sa phobal agus sa mhór-réigiún a fhorbairt.

Rochtain ar sheirbhísí éigeantacha agus cuimsiú sóisialta

- ✦ Foirmle mhaoinithe sláinte a chruthú chun comhionannas réigiúnach níos fearr a sholáthar.
- ✦ Dreasachtaí grádaithe i gcomhréir na hiargúlachta chun cleachtas ginearálta i gceantair leithlisithe a chur chun cinn.
- ✦ Trí ghéarospidéal poiblí déag in Iarthar na hÉireann atá i mbaol clabhsúir faoi Thuarascálacha Hanly agus Teamwork a choinneáil agus a fhorbairt.
- ✦ 1 700 leaba phoiblí i ngéarospidéal an reigiúin i mbaol clabhsúir faoi Thuarascáil PA a choinneáil.
- ✦ Seirbhísí ospidéal a atheagrú chun máinliacht in ospidéal bheaga poiblí a chothú.
- ✦ A chinntiú go bhfanann seirbhísí do ghéarghalair amhail ailse, galar cairdiafheadánach, stróc agus diaibéiteas, imeasctha faoi smacht ospidéal poiblí, mar atá faoi láthair.
- ✦ Straitéis Náisiúnta ailse a athbhreithniú chun chur chuige réigiúnach cothromaithe a sholáthar, go háirithe maidir le máinliacht agus le raideolaíocht.
- ✦ Rochtain chothrom do chách ar chúram leanaí

ar chaighdeán maith. Ba chóir an plean a fhreaschur chun deireadh a chur leis an Scéim Chomhdheiseanna Cúram Leanaí agus í a athsholáthar leis an Scéim nua Fóirdheontais Cúram Leanaí.

- ✦ Ní mór na ciorruithe san oideachas a fhreaschur, an líon daltaí sa rang a laghdú agus an clár tógála scoile a sholáthar.
- ✦ Le gur féidir a chinntiú go bhfuil stáisiúin Ghardaí ag feidhmiú mar is ceart i gceantair tuaithe ní mór beirt Ghardaí ar a laghad a bheith i láthair le linn do stáisiún bheith oscailte.
- ✦ Ba chóir straitéis shoiléir a fhorbairt chun Gardaí a dhéanamh a shofheicthe is féidir i gceantair tuaithe.
- ✦ Ní mór seirbhísí riarachán a dhéanamh sibhialtach agus 40% den mheitheal oibre ina sibhialtaigh laistigh den tSeirbhís Gharda, ag cloí le caighdeán idirnáisiúnta agus lena chinntiú go bhfuil níos mó Gardaí ar fáil ag stáisiúin tuaithe.
- ✦ Is gá beartas soiléir rialtais bheith ann maidir le híosmhéid oifigí poist atá riachtanach. Ba chóir don rialtas idirghabháil a dhéanamh faoi ordú um oibleagáid seirbhíse poiblí (OSP) chun oifigí poist atá i mbaol a ndúnta a shábháil.

Na hOileáin

- ✦ Ba chóir don rialtas Cairt um Chearta a thabhairt chun cinn, bunaithe ar riachtanais gach aon oileán a bheadh ráthaithe sa dlí. Bheadh na cearta seo mar bhonn de straitéis chun na hoileáin a athphobalú chun daoine óga a spreagadh le fanacht ann. Is é a bheadh sa chairt an ceart chun dul i dtír ar na hOileáin trí chéanna cearta agus aerstráicí, le spriocanna agus scálaí ama, agus an ceart chun seirbhísí sóisialta éigeantacha. Ba chóir go mbeadh straitéis ar leith cruthaithe fostaíochta ann ó Údarás na Gaeltachta bunaithe ar riachtanais gach oileáin.
- ✦ Ba chóir comharchumainn oileáin agus cuideachtaí forbartha a éascú chun ceadúnais iascaireachta agus/nó 'tonnáiste' ilfhiúsach a cheannach a d'fhéadfaí a ligean ar cíos d'iascairí oileáin ar mhian leo dul isteach sa tionscal nó a n-oibríochtaí iascaireachta a leathnú.
- ✦ Ba chóir reachtaíocht a chur i bhfeidhm a bhaineann le cearta oideachais do phobail oileáin.
- ✦ Ba chóir níos mó de rogha a thabhairt do mhná oileáin maidir le cúram cnáimhseachais, cuairteanna ar an oileán ó mhná ghlúine san áireamh.

An Ghaeltacht

- ✦ Ba chóir gurb é príomhról an Aire agus na Roinne Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta a athrú go hAire leasa chultúrtha, shóisialta, eacnamaíochta, bonneagair agus oideachais na Gaeltachta.
- ✦ Ba chóir gach plan agus foráil reachtúil do cheantair Ghaeltachta a imeascadh i bpróiseas planála atá cuimsitheach agus comhtháite ar a mbeadh planáil teanga, planáil áitiúil agus fhisiceach, planáil oideachais, planáil struchtúrach agus planáil shóisialta, seirbhísí taca teaghlaigh san áireamh.
- ✦ Ba chóir meicníocht reachtúil a fhoráil chun idirdhealú idir na cineálacha difriúla pobail Ghaeltachta atá ann laistigh de theorainneacha reachtúla Gaeltachta.
- ✦ Ba chóir An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta a bhunú mar chomhlacht reachtúil. Bheadh sí freagrach as gach cinneadh beartais a bhaineann le gach gné de chóras oideachais na Gaeltachta.
- ✦ Ba chóir scoileanna sealbhaithe teanga a bhunú i limistéir Ghaeltachta Chatagóir A do leanaí nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Chuirfeadh an scéim seo seirbhísí ar fáil idir bhunoideachas agus iarbhunoideachas le cur ar chumas leanaí iad a bheith líofa go leor le bheith rannpháirteach in Oideachas Gaeilge.
- ✦ Ba chóir go mbeadh comhoibriú idir soláthróirí turasóireachta cultúrtha na Gaeltachta agus soláthróirí trachtála, a d'fhéadfaí a bhaint amach trí fhórais ag leibhéal áitiúil.
- ✦ Ba chóir tionscnamh uile-Éireann a bhunú chun rannpháirtíochtaí idir institiúidí tríú leibhéal agus an Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta a chothú arbh aidhm dó ranna a lonnú agus a leathnú sna ceantair Ghaeltachta agus cúrsaí a sholáthar le freastal ar riachtanais an réigiúin.

Key Recommendations

Overview

There is huge potential in the counties along the Western seaboard. It has a highly educated population, a strong record of entrepreneurship and innovation, is the centre of the country's fishing industry, and is an area of natural beauty with huge untapped tourist potential. But unless the people in the West come together and speak with one voice the government will continue to put the needs of the West behind those of the South and East. The West of Ireland can be rebuilt if there is a new political approach and the measures listed below are implemented.

Structural Reform

- ✦ The Department of the Environment should be given overall responsibility for regional development and renamed the Department of the Environment and Regional Development. Its remit would be to advise other departments and agencies on regional policies, to monitor impacts of government policies, to work closely with regional assemblies and authorities and to co-ordinate with the Department of Regional Development in the north.
- ✦ The counties of the Western seaboard (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, West Cork and West Limerick) should be treated as a distinct region with sub-regions of North West, West and South West.
- ✦ A Regional Development Impact Assessment framework should be established in law to compel all state bodies and departments to make an assessment of whether policies being developed would create regional imbalance and set out what steps could be taken to amend such a policy to ensure balanced regional development.
- ✦ When a person or group believes that their region will be affected by a state policy, leading to imbalanced regional development, they could complain at first instance to the policy director of the department in question who would have to respond within one month of the complaint. Any further complaints would be made to the Equality Commission who could initiate an investigation with the full cooperation of the department.
- ✦ A range of social and economic indicators of

regional development should be drawn up and used to monitor the output of all government departments.

- ✦ The 1999 White Paper on Rural Development should be reviewed to properly address the economic development of market towns and the wider rural community.
- ✦ Consideration should be given to holding direct elections to Regional Assemblies and/or Regional Authorities.
- ✦ Social and economic data should be collected and published county by county so that plans tailored to the needs of the individual regions in terms of job creation, infrastructure and public service delivery can be delivered.

Employment and enterprise

- ✦ Introduce targeted job creation programmes through the delivery of school building programmes, social housing commitments and capital investment in infrastructural road and rail projects.
- ✦ Regional and sub-regional job creation targets to be set for Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and other Enterprise Support Agencies.
- ✦ Develop a strategy to support retention of local retailers including the enhancement of local retail infrastructure, to prevent the drainage of local small and medium retail business to big superstores in city and town centres.
- ✦ A self-sustaining state agency, similar to the Shannon Development company, with a property portfolio should be developed for the south-west, north-west, and western counties to promote larger entrepreneurial activity at a local level.
- ✦ Develop a green economic strategy for the Western seaboard region, which would explore enterprise opportunities in green services and renewable energy.
- ✦ Forfás should carry out an immediate review of the capacity of the Western seaboard region to attract Foreign Direct Investment and the measures which need to be taken at a strategic level to improve its competitiveness and boost employment opportunities.

- ✦ A Regional Cluster Policy for the Western seaboard should be developed, which would target a specific sector e.g. renewable energy and make recommendations on third level education and physical infrastructure requirements to promote such clusters.
- ✦ The Government needs to develop and implement an all-Ireland Economic Development plan to address the deficit of infrastructure and reduce inefficiencies of scale and duplication of services, in particular government agencies.
- ✦ The state should maximise the use of EU funding for cross-border trade and address the need for an all-Ireland research and development (R&D) strategy including extra assistance to small and medium enterprises and new businesses to develop business plans for R&D.
- ✦ County Enterprise Board support schemes should be revised with increased employment grants, stock grants, cashflow support grants, internal efficiency supports, knowledge development supports, and the removal of matching fund requirement.
- ✦ Establish a Western region State Financed Loan Guarantee Scheme in conjunction with the EIB for SMEs operating in the western coastal seaboard with an annual turnover of no greater than €5 million.
- ✦ Set regional and sub-regional targets for visitor numbers, visitor spending and funding, which could be broken into county targets to encourage tourism.
- ✦ Establish partnerships between third level institutions and business parks such as exists between Kerry Technology Park and Tralee Institute of Technology
- ✦ Extend placement schemes in companies based in western counties for undergraduates.
- ✦ Investment projects should be encouraged to strengthen the R&D capacity of the ITs with the objective of setting minimum targets for R&D to ensure more regionally balanced R&D public investment.
- ✦ Examine of the feasibility of creating a combined university of the north-west, with economic regeneration as its core aim.
- ✦ Expand the Women in Business programme run by County Enterprise Boards.

Infrastructure/Balanced Regional Development

- ✦ The National Development Plan 2007-2013 should re-introduce its policy of having a specific goal of achieving balanced regional development with set targets for each region.
- ✦ By law the Department of Transport should publish a Regional Development Impact Assessment when initiating and drafting policy for the road network.
- ✦ The Western Rail Corridor is critical to the development of the west. It should not be subject to cutbacks but proceed as planned. There should be a review of the Claremorris to Collooney section as matter of priority.
- ✦ The Atlantic Road Corridor, from Waterford to Letterkenny, should be a seamless dual carriageway built under public finance.
- ✦ A joint Assembly-Oireachtas committee should be established to study the findings of the report being produced by the Department of Regional Development in the north on the development of the rail network in the northwest. The proposed Derry to Letterkenny railway line, with the extension to Sligo and the proposed link from the North West to Dublin should also be reviewed.
- ✦ The Atlantic Corridor should be designated a Sustainable Transport Corridor, comprising balanced and sustainable joint road/rail infrastructure development in a single package.
- ✦ Road departments in county councils should be transformed into sustainable transport departments in light of changing economic and environmental circumstances.
- ✦ Rural Transport Programmes should operate to county boundaries as a matter of priority and not within natural catchment areas.
- ✦ Inspections of areas which broadband providers claim to be connected, but have been identified as blackspots by local councils.
- ✦ State financial support should be provided to pilot next generation broadband schemes in at least three towns in each of the 10 Western seaboard counties in which broadband infrastructure enables it.
- ✦ The Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources to identify renewable energy zones on the Western seaboard region and bring forward proposals for the development of community and wider regional renewable energy projects.

Access to essential services and social inclusion

- ✦ Replacement of the current inequitable healthcare system with a universal public health system offering equality of geographic access, free at point of delivery.
- ✦ Development of a health funding formula to deliver greater regional equality.
- ✦ Retention and development of the thirteen acute public hospitals, including up to 1 700 public patient beds, in the West of Ireland threatened with closure.
- ✦ Midwife-led units and home birth services should be developed in Western seaboard counties.
- ✦ Services for chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes, should remain integrated under public hospital control.
- ✦ The national cancer strategy should be revised to provide for a balanced regional approach, particularly in relation to surgery and radiology.
- ✦ Equal access for all to good quality childcare and a reversal to the changes in the Child Care Subvention Scheme
- ✦ Reverse the cuts in education including reducing class sizes and delivering on the school building programme.
- ✦ In order to ensure the proper functioning of Garda stations in rural areas there needs to be a minimum of 2 Gardaí present while stations are open.
- ✦ A coherent strategy to maximise Garda visibility in rural areas;
- ✦ Administrative services must be civilianised and brought up to 40% of the total workforce within the Garda service in line with international standards;
- ✦ There is a need for a clear Government policy in relation to the minimum number of post offices that are necessary. In order to save a number of post offices at risk of imminent closure, the Government should intervene in the form of a public service obligation order (PSO).

The Islands

- ✦ The government to bring forward a Charter of Rights, based on the needs of the individual islands, which would be guaranteed in law. These rights would form the basis of a strategy to re-populate the islands and encourage young people to stay. The charter would include the right to access the islands through proper piers and airstrips, and the right to essential social services. There should also be a specific job creation strategy with targets and timescales from Údarás na Gaeltachta based on the needs of each island.
- ✦ Island cooperatives and development companies should be facilitated in buying fishing licences and/or polyvalent 'tonnage' which could be leased out to island fishermen who wish to enter the industry or to expand their fishing operations.
- ✦ Legislation should be put in place relating specifically to educational rights for island communities
- ✦ Island women should be given greater choice in maternity care, including visits on the island from midwives.

An Ghaeltacht

- ✦ The primary role of the Minister and of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, should be changed to that of cultural, social, economic, infrastructure and educational interests of the Gaeltacht;
- ✦ All plans and statutory provisions for Gaeltacht areas should be integrated into a comprehensive and cohesive planning process which would include language planning, local and physical planning, education planning, structural planning and social planning including family support services;
- ✦ A statutory mechanism should be provided to differentiate between the different types of Gaeltacht communities that exist within the statutory Gaeltacht boundaries.
- ✦ Establish An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta as a statutory body, which would have responsibility for all policy considerations related to every aspect of the Gaeltacht education system.
- ✦ Establish language acquisition schools in Category A Gaeltacht districts for children who do not

speaking Irish. This scheme would provide services from primary to post-primary education to enable children to acquire a sufficient fluency in Irish to participate in Irish language education.

- ✦ There should be enhanced cooperation between Gaeltacht cultural tourism providers and commercial providers, which could be achieved through forums at local level.
- ✦ The establishment of an all-Ireland initiative to promote partnerships between third level institutions and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with the objective of locating and expanding departments in the Gaeltacht areas and providing courses to meet the needs of the region.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Key Messages

- ✦ The Western region has a predominantly rural population with 67.8% of the total population living outside population centres of 1,500 or more
- ✦ The imbalance in growth between urban and rural areas has led to a decline of rural populations, with 30% of Electoral Districts experiencing a net loss of 234,392 people.
- ✦ In 2006 Gross Value Added* for the western region and border regions was at 75% the State average in comparison to 132% for Dublin¹.
- ✦ While the Western region has seen an increase of 21% of employment between 2000 and 2005, the Region's employment pattern is characterised by its dependence on primary sectors such as agriculture, fishing and construction. These amount to 20% of total employment in the Western region in comparison to 16% for state as a whole.
- ✦ Only 38% of the Western region's graduates find their first place of employment in their home counties in comparison with 79.5% of Dublin's graduates.
- ✦ While infrastructural deficits between the Western seaboard and Eastern seaboard region are widely acknowledged, planned spending on physical infrastructure under the previous National Development Plan in the BMW region fell short while the eastern seaboard was above forecasted spending.
- ✦ While there has been economic progress in the Western seaboard region, albeit at a disproportionately lower level than the east coast, access to social services has actually regressed over the past ten years, leading to a situation where far greater inequalities exist in social services between the regions.
- ✦ The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) identifies gateways and hubs as the engine drivers of economic development for the regions.
- ✦ Unlike the National Development Plan 2000-2006 there is no regional breakdown of the new National Development Plan (NDP).

¹ This estimate is based on NUTS 3 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units). The western region consists of Galway, May and Roscommon. While the Border counties consist of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Monaghan and Louth
*see 1.2 for a definition of Gross Value Added

1.1 Population and Demographics

The total population of the Western region reached 762,335 in 2006. This was an increase of 57,187 people since 2002. The growth of 8.1% between 2002 and 2006 is almost exactly equivalent to the rest of the state as a whole (8.2%). All counties on the western coast saw increases in their population, with counties such as Kerry increasing from 132,527 to 139,835 and County Cork increasing from 324,767 to 361,766. While there have been increases in the population of each county on the west coast, much of this growth has been concentrated into gateway and hub towns. The imbalance in growth between urban and rural areas has led to a decline of rural populations throughout the state: 30% of Electoral Districts experienced a net loss of 234,392 people².

The An Clár programme targets areas suffering from population decline. Figure 1 below highlights the electoral districts in western coastal counties that are experiencing population decline. Between 1926 and 2002 the population of those areas within Clare, Donegal, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Limerick, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo, which are included in the Clár programme declined by 41%.

The Western region has a predominantly rural population with 67.8% of the total population living outside population centres of 1,500 or more. In counties such as Leitrim and Roscommon, over 80% of the population live in rural areas, compared to Galway where 56.9% of the population live outside of population areas of 1,500 or more. Western coastal areas and the Border Midlands and Western region (BMW) region have higher levels of elderly dependency ratios compared to the rest of the country³.

² Meredith, David, *Rural Areas in transition: Evidence of Rural Restructuring in the Republic of Ireland*, RERC Working Paper.

³ RERC Working Paper Series 07-WP-RE-11

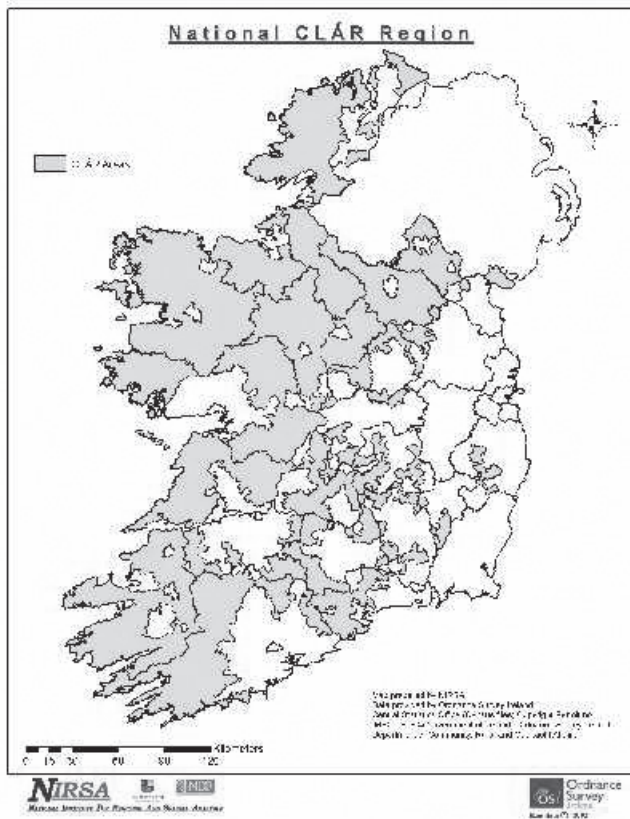


FIGURE 1

1.2 Regional Disparities

Regional Gross Value Added per capita (GVA) is the common standard used by the EU to measure regional diversity in incomes or output. Gross Value Added is a measure of the value of the goods and services produced in the economy. Over the period 2000-2005 the productivity gap between Dublin and the Western and Border counties has widened. In 2006, Gross Value Added for the Border and Western regions was at 75% the State average in comparison to 132% for Dublin⁴.

Disposable income also reflects regional imbalances: despite some improvement between 2000 and 2005, Dublin was 13% above the state average in 2006 while the Border counties were 9.4% below the state average and western counties were 6.3% below the state average. Counties Kerry, Mayo,

4 Western Region Key Statistics Section 4. Data are not available at a county level. The regional classifications of these data are based on the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units) classification used by Eurostat. The regions for which the accounts have been compiled are the eight Regional Authority NUTS3 regions that compose the Republic of Ireland. The definition of the regions is outlined in the Table, and those counties that compose the Western Region are highlighted.

Roscommon and Donegal were more than 10% below the state average.

1.3 Employment

While the Western region has seen an increase of 21% of employment between 2000 and 2005, the Region's employment pattern is characterized by its dependence on primary sectors such as agriculture, fishing and construction, which amounts to 20% of total employment in the West in comparison to 16% as the state average. There are also spatial divides within the Western seaboard region with high-tech manufacturing jobs being concentrated in counties Galway and Clare whereas traditional industrial jobs in the food and drink sector are found in Roscommon⁵. The Western region has a lower proportion of the workforce employed in services with 55% compared to 62% as the state average. Overall the relative dependence on agriculture, fishing and construction leaves Western coastal counties in a particularly vulnerable position as we enter into a period of recession.

1.4 Retention of Third-level Graduates

The Western seaboard region has significantly high levels of people completing the Leaving Certificate and high levels of students enrolling in third level courses. In 2004, Sligo, Galway, Mayo, Kerry and Leitrim had the highest admission rates to third level education, with Donegal, Clare and Roscommon in the top 11. Sligo and Galway are calculated to have the two highest admission rates in the state, which is 72% for Sligo and 68% for Galway.

However, while there are significant numbers of people attending third level institutions, it is the Greater Dublin Area, which remains the first place of employment for the majority of college graduates. Only 34% of the Western seaboard region's graduates find their first place of employment in their home counties in comparison with 79.5% for Dublin. With the exception of Galway, most graduates obtain their first job in the Greater Dublin Area region as opposed to their home county, with counties such as Roscommon and Leitrim only retaining 19% of their graduates in 2004.

5 Western Development Commission (2004) Enterprise and Employment in the Western region

As a result of the overall low levels of students retained by the Western seaboard Region, the regional labour market for the Western region has a disproportionately low level of workers with third-level qualifications in comparison to Dublin, 22% compared to 25%.

1.5 Infrastructure

Investment in physical infrastructure is critical in addressing regional imbalances between western counties and the Greater Dublin Area. While infrastructural deficits between the Western seaboard and Eastern seaboard region are widely acknowledged, planned spending on physical infrastructure under the previous National Development Plan fell short while the eastern seaboard went above forecasted spending. As a result of continued under spending infrastructural deficits in communications, transport and energy continue to be highlighted as the central barrier to economic and social progress for the Region.

1.6 Access to Services

While there has been economic progress in the Western seaboard region, albeit at a disproportionately lower level than the east coast, access to social services has actually regressed over the past ten years, leading to a situation where far greater inequalities exist in social services between the regions.

Post offices are in terminal decline: 344 post offices have closed between 2001 and 2008 with 144 closures between 2006 and 2008. According to An Post the majority of these closures have taken place in western counties. Nearly half of all Garda stations surveyed by the Report in western counties are limited to morning time opening hours with the presence of only one Garda.

With the exception of Galway city, all Western region counties have poverty levels above the state average with counties Donegal, Mayo and Leitrim being the three most likely counties where people will experience poverty.

1.7 Balanced Regional Development

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) identifies gateways and hubs as the engine drivers of economic development for the regions. A Gateway Innovation Fund (GIF) is provided for in the

NDP 2007-2013, which aims to enhance the growth of the 9 gateway cities and towns identified under the NSS, has been placed under review.

While the importance of Gateways such as Galway should not be underestimated, smaller towns and villages must play a wider role than that which is envisaged by the National Spatial Strategy. Small towns are said to be home to "one fifth of Europe's population and many of its most creative businesses/service providers"⁶.

Small and medium sized towns continue to play a vital role in regional development, but face a number of challenges such a declining population, weak economic infrastructure and the closure of local services. The continued focus at EU and national level on existing cities and Gateways has been criticized by the Northern Periphery Programme as "*short-sighted and ultimately dysfunctional for communities of all kinds. In the long run, the performance of Europe's city-regions and deep rural areas alike is highly dependent on sustaining the constellation of small towns which underpin and anchor these regions. Maintaining territorial cohesion via balanced regional development and creating opportunities for all of Europe's people are fundamental principles of the Union*". Small and medium sized towns and rural villages should develop their own enterprises rather than accommodate commuters as envisaged by the National Spatial Strategy. A clearly articulated strategy must be developed for rural areas and provincial towns to deliver more balanced development within the region.

1.8 Funding for Regional Development

Unlike the National Development Plan 2000-2006 there is no regional breakdown of the new National Development Plan. In terms of total allocation, the Border, Midlands and Western region (BMW) was to get substantially less in the 2000-2006 NDP than the Southern and Eastern region (S&E): €16.9 billion versus €34.6 billion. This can be attributed to differences in population density, traffic congestion and other factors. On a per capita basis the Border, Midlands and Western region was to receive approximately €17,500 per capita over the period of the plan with the Southern and Eastern region was to be granted €13,000 per capita.

⁶ "Draft Conference Resolutions from "Northern Periphery Programme: Small Towns Network", Jyväskylä Conference: 4-5 September 2006

However, the mid-term evaluation of the National Development Plan 2000-2006 showed that progress was slower in the BMW region than in the S&E region, especially in the delivery of national roads, public transport and research and development. The National Development Plan 2000-2006 had little evidence that measures had been specifically tailored to the needs of individual regions and essentially the same measures were applied in both regions. This ignored important spatial differences and particular investment priorities of the regions.

The Economic and Social Research Institute in the '*Ex-ante Evaluation of the Investment Priorities*' for the National Development Plan 2007-2013 said that project selection criteria for the new National Development Plan should include the principle of balanced regional development in line with the National Special Strategy. The Ex-ante evaluation also called for the regional dimension of the National Development Plan to be based on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics regions 3 (NUTS3), which is Dublin, South East, South West, Mid-West, Mid-East, West, Border and Midlands rather than the two NUTS2 regions, which is the BMW and S&E⁷. It also called for better data collection for both targeting and evaluation purposes.

⁷ For a definition of NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 see abbreviations and glossary of terms

Chapter 2: Economy

Key Messages

- ✦ Despite economic growth over the past decade, Gross Value Added for the Western and Border regions was at 75% the State average in comparison to 132% for Dublin in 2006.
- ✦ In total, agriculture, fishing and construction amount to 20% of all employment in the Western region.
- ✦ Due to the lack of high skilled job opportunities, the Western seaboard region continues to lose a disproportional number of its third-level graduates to the Greater Dublin Area. As a result of this, the Western region's workforce has a lower level of third-level graduates than the state average, 22% compared with 25%.
- ✦ Between September 2007 and September 2008 a further 29,988 people in the Western seaboard went on to the live register. This represents 38% of the number of people who have gone on the live register in the state over the past year.
- ✦ The average farm income in western coastal counties is below average, while most western farmers are in receipt of a Single Farm Payment at the lowest rates.
- ✦ Despite having 11% of EU fishing waters, Irish fishermen only have 4% of the EU quota.
- ✦ Manufacturing accounts for 17% of the workforce in rural areas compared to 12% in urban areas. High-tech manufacturing has clustered in the Galway-Clare area while traditional manufacturing is located in the north-west.
- ✦ In 2006, construction represented 20% of all males working in the Western region. The downturn in the property market has had a serious impact on the construction industry: between January 2008 and August 2008 construction represented the single largest defined category of people signing on to the live register.
- ✦ Increased investment in school building programmes, social housing and capital investment in infrastructural road and rail projects is the most direct way of absorbing the number of workers likely to face redundancy in construction.
- ✦ The north-west has suffered a decline of 30% in overseas visitors since 1999. In 2006, counties Clare, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal) generated just 9% of the overall revenue state revenue generated in tourism.
- ✦ While the south-west of Ireland has traditionally attracted a large number of tourists, the closure of the Cork to Swansea ferry service in January 2008 is estimated to have already cost the south-west region €35 million in tourism revenue.
- ✦ To prevent serious deterioration of tourism in the south-west the Government must review as a priority the closure of the Swansea to Cork ferry service.
- ✦ Tourism bodies also must be given a clearly defined role in transportation policy.
- ✦ Though tourist numbers have declined in the Western region as a whole, the total tourist expenditure still accounts for 7.6% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) for the region in comparison to 3% for Dublin.

2.1 Economic Overview

While the Western region experienced growth in employment of 26% between 2000 and 2006 to reach a total workforce of 347,000 significant regional disparities in employment persist. The Gross Value Added (GVA) per person is the standard form in which regional diversity is measured by the EU. In 2006, Gross Value Added for the western and border regions was at 75% of the State average in comparison to 132% for Dublin⁸. Regional distinctions are also notable in employment trends with agriculture accounting for 10% of employment in the Western region compared with 6% nationally. In total agriculture, forestry, fishing and construction amount to 20% of all employment in the Western region. Manufacturing, which was a key source of employment in the past has continued to decline from 18% to 15% in the period 2000-2006. Traditional industries such as the textile industry in Donegal, which were once one of the main sources of employment have receded over the past 15 years. While the textile industry in Donegal has declined, the food and drink industry in

8 Western Development Commission 'Key Statistics' section

Roscommon still accounts for 11.7% of employment. Despite growth in employment of 79% between 2000 and 2006 in the service sector, services in the Western region account for 56% of the total workforce, which is below the state average of 61%. Public services remain a significant source of employment, accounting for 24% of the workforce and 42% of the total number of females at work⁹.

The educational profile of the workforce of the Western seaboard illustrates the low level of third-level graduate retention. Despite having a higher percentage of students in third level education¹⁰, the West region's workforce has a lower level of third-level graduates than the rest of the state average, 22% compared with 25%. Due to lack of high skilled employment opportunities, the majority of students find their first job in the Greater Dublin Area. Though there have been increases in the number of students securing their first employment in their home counties¹¹, counties such as Leitrim and Roscommon continue to retain only 10% of graduates¹².

Employment in farming and traditional industries is higher in the north-west, with a concentration of 'hi-tech' jobs in Galway and Clare. Kerry and West Cork are predominantly reliant on industries such as agriculture, construction, wholesale and retail, with tourism playing a very important role in rural areas. Despite the gradual erosion of farming and fishing, both industries continue to represent a significant amount of the workforce.

At a regional level, employment patterns indicate a relatively high dependence on agriculture, construction and public service. With the downturn in the economy, and the sharp decline in the construction industry¹³, the West's economy is particularly vulnerable. Between September 2007 and September 2008 a further 29,988 people in the Western seaboard region signed on to the live register. This represents 38% of the number of people who have signed on across the state in the past year¹⁴.

The problem of retaining third-level graduates also affects the potential of rural enterprises to attract highly skilled staff. In order to sustain the economies of the region as a whole,

attention must be focused on encouraging new enterprises and industries in those counties where traditional employment sectors are in decline. The Western region, with its predominantly rural population must focus on sustaining rural economies while maximising the potential of gateways and towns. As agriculture continues to decline, there is a need to focus on the non-farm rural economy, while trying all possible means of sustaining the agricultural and fishing industries.

2.2 Agriculture

While there is a continuous decline in the numbers of people involved in fishing and farming, these sectors still represent a large number of the Western workforce and a higher proportion of employment for Western counties than the state average, 7% compared to 4.6% for the state. Agriculture has been declining steadily in the state for the last three decades: in 1975, 228,000 were employed in agriculture, whereas 128,000 were employed in agriculture in 2006. Western counties such as Galway have seen a rapid decrease of 32% over the period 1996-2006 in the number of people employed in agriculture. The decline may reflect global trends in the farming and fishing sector, however, agriculture policy at a national and EU level has been partly responsible for the continued deterioration.

In regional terms, the average farm income is below the state average. The majority of western farmers are in receipt of a Single Farm Payment at the lowest rates. The combination of low incomes and low subsidies has made farming very difficult to sustain in Western seaboard counties. Disparities in income between farmers in western coastal counties and farmers in other regions arise from traditional production patterns as western farmers are more likely to engage in types of farming with lower returns. The average farm size in the west is significantly lower than the national average, which ensures lower levels of Single Farm Payment (SFP) income. Western farms are also less capital intensive with the Border Midlands and Western region accounting for 53% of all farms in the state while only accounting for 36.7% of all farm machines.

Lower educational levels and inadequate management skills amongst western farmers has limited their employment opportunities to lower skilled jobs. As the traditional off farm jobs in areas such as construction are expected to be severely affected by the recession, employment prospects of farmers are very bleak.

9 WDC Case Studies of Rural Enterprises p.16

10 O'Connell "Who went to College in 2004? A national survey of new entrants to higher education

11 48% gain their first employment in Western region – up from 37% in 2000

12 The Western region Key Statistics February 2008

13 Redundancies in construction were estimated to be at 6513 for the period of January to August 31 2008

14 CSO Live Register Tables September 2008

2.3 Fishing

In 2007, only 2,400 people were directly employed in fishing with up to 11,000 employed directly and indirectly through processing and ancillary services¹⁵. The fishing sector is predominantly located in Western counties, with 75% of the entire fishing workforce located in counties Donegal, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Clare and West Cork. In west Kerry the number of jobs in fishing has fallen from 87 to 7 over the past ten years.

Fishing exports continued to decline from €425 million in 2002 to €391 million in 2004 accounting for only 4.1% of total agri-food exports. Fish imports have increased from €144 million in 2002 to €171 million between 2002 and 2004. The total catch for Irish fleets has declined from 390,000 tonnes in 1995 to 210,000 tonnes in 2006.

Since 1993 the Irish fleet has declined by over 30%, a figure which is expected to be accelerated in the future¹⁶. Despite having 11% of EU fishing waters, Irish fishermen only have 4% of the EU quota. In comparison to other EU countries, the fall in the Irish catch as a result of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has been much greater since 1995: 46% in Ireland compared to 40% for Spain, 32% for the UK and 13.6% for the French fleet. In 2002, the Common Fisheries Policy Review Group highlighted the 'inequalities and injustices of the present fisheries policy with Ireland having a quota of 4% despite having 11% of EU fishing water. Despite criticisms of the inequity of the Common Fisheries Policy, successive Irish Governments have failed to amend it.

2.4 Manufacturing and Industry

While there has been a decline, particularly in the textile industry in Donegal, manufacturing continues to play an important role particularly in rural areas, accounting for 17% of the workforce in rural areas, compared to 12% in urban areas.

Manufacturing and industry has tended to cluster in particular areas and counties. Medical Technology Device firms have clustered in the Galway and Clare area, while food and drink accounts for half of all industrial jobs in Roscommon. The factors contributing to concentration of the more high-skilled

industrial jobs in the Galway-Clare area would mainly relate to greater third-level education, transport and electricity infrastructure- with traditional industries being located in the lower quality infrastructure areas of the north-west. While the Donegal textile industry demonstrates the potential vulnerability of industrial clusters, through proper investment manufacturing in Western seaboard counties can continue to play a major role in the economy of the West.

In order to sustain the manufacturing industry in the western coastal region, there is a need to upgrade the skills of the manufacturing workforce and increase the innovation and research capacity of such industries. Research and development and the creation of a regional cluster policy shall be discussed below.

The Rapporteur recommends a regional strategy to consolidate traditional and modern manufacturing through focusing on upgrading the skills of workers in the industry. Such a strategy could also focus on attracting new industries and the type of investments necessary to encourage investment.

2.5 Construction

The proportion of people employed in the construction industry in the West is above the national average. In 2006, construction represented 20% of all males working in the Western region. With the downturn in the housing market, workers in construction are facing very difficult times. According to Department of Enterprise statistics on the number of people who have signed on to the Live Register from the 1st of January 2008 to 31st of August 2008, building and civil engineering was the largest single defined category amounting to 6,513. The number of people signing on may not, however, present accurately the level of redundancies within the construction industry. In Kerry alone, over 1,000 construction workers have either emigrated or lost their jobs in the last six months. The Construction Industry Federation (CIF) stated that Kerry's construction workforce now stands at around 5,000 which is at least 20% less than what it was six months ago. Non-national construction workers who have lost their jobs are returning to their country of origin, while the broader construction workforce may be moving to other countries such as England in search of jobs.

As a response to this pressing problem, a number of measures must be taken in both the short and longer term to offset

¹⁵ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food 2007/2008 p3

¹⁶ Meredith/McGinley, Governance and Sustainability: Impacts of Common Fisheries Policy in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, RERC Working Paper p14

the numbers of semi or unskilled workers who are facing redundancy. Infrastructural projects must be fast tracked to absorb some of the workforce facing redundancy. Retraining and employment schemes must be targeted particularly at workers coming from the construction industry with a view to upgrading their skills.

The Rapporteur recommends that:

- ✦ **Targeted job creation programmes through the delivery of school building programmes, social housing commitments and capital investment in infrastructural road and rail projects.**
- ✦ **infrastructural projects recommended in Chapter 4 should be given priority to ensure that construction workers can find alternative means of employment.**

2.6 Tourism

Tourism is an important part of the economy accounting for 3.9% of the Gross National Product in 2004¹⁷. In the National Spatial Strategy, tourism was highlighted as a sector which could develop the economies of areas which would otherwise be economically underdeveloped:

“Tourism is characterised by the fact that consumption takes place where the service is provided. Also significant is the fact that tourism activity is focused in some cases on areas with an otherwise weak economic base. As a result it can have a positive influence on regional development”¹⁸.

Despite the potential of the tourism industry to assist more peripheral regions, it is Dublin and other larger urban areas that continue to attract the largest numbers of tourists. The north-west has suffered a decline of 30% in overseas visitors since 1999. In 2006, the counties Clare, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, and Donegal generated just 9% of the overall national revenue generated in tourism¹⁹. Counties such as Leitrim and Roscommon accounted for just 0.3% and 0.6% of overall tourism revenue in comparison to 9.3% for Galway. The decline in tourism to the West can be largely attributed to the emergence of city breaks through low cost flights and more affordable long haul package holidays.

Access to the Western seaboard region is vital in attracting overseas tourists. With the closure of certain transport services in the recent past, the tourism sector in the West has seen sharp declines. The closure of the Cork to Swansea ferry service in January 2008 is estimated to have cost the South-West Region €35 million in tourism revenue to date. When the ferry was active, it carried between one hundred thousand and one hundred and forty thousand passengers per year. Without the ferry service, access to the south west has become far more difficult and will have long term consequences for the Region.

The Rapporteur recommends as a matter of priority that an urgent review should be carried out of the Swansea to Cork ferry service to explore the avenues available to restore the service.

While there have been positive developments at the Ireland West Airport Knock and Shannon Airport, connections between to the Region's two international airports and major international centres remain vulnerable. From a regional perspective, state bodies must look to continue to upgrade transport infrastructure connecting the two international airports with other major urban centres and areas of tourist attraction. For this reason projects such as the Claremorris to Collooney section of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) railway line are imperative for the development of the Western airports. Regional airports in Donegal, Sligo, Galway, Waterford and Kerry are also vital for attracting tourists. Many of these regional airports have international flights that promote tourism for their counties. As in the two international airports access is a major challenge and must be addressed to grow the tourism sector²⁰.

The Rapporteur recommends that tourism development agencies should have a clearly defined role in transport policy²¹.

Tourist numbers have declined in the Western region as a whole, but the total tourist expenditure still accounts for 7.6% of the Gross Value Added for the region in comparison to 3% for Dublin. While tourist numbers have declined, the outstanding natural beauty of the western coastal region leaves potential for renewed growth in the tourism industry. Of the 6.4 million tourists that visited Ireland in 2004, over 2 million visitors cited heritage and culture as the primary reason for travelling to Ireland. The Western region is the natural centre

17 CSO Quarterly Survey

18 The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020: People, Places, and Potential (p.22)

19 Fáilte Ireland, Region Facts Sheets 2006

20 For more discussion on airports see Chapter 4 section 4.8

21 Recommended by the WDC in their Submission to the National Development Plan 2007-2012 p.67

of Ireland's traditional heritage and culture. Through renewed focus on cultural tourism there are real opportunities for the industry to be revived. Investment in arts, culture and heritage is therefore fundamental if the industry is to be revived.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **clear targets for visitor numbers, visitor spending and funding for the north-west, west and south west regions, county targets are also necessary for visitor numbers;**
- ✦ **investment in tourism product development which recognises the assets of the region are critical e.g. outdoor recreation has potential for counties such as Galway but must be matched by government policies on access to the countryside and clear budgets and programmes that can provide long-term development and not just start-up;**
- ✦ **capital assistance for innovative or larger-scale tourism products and investment in cultural products and activities should be encouraged.**

Chapter 3: Enterprise and Investment

Key Messages

- ✦ While there was an increase in employment in firms supported by state agencies between 1996 and 2006, the Western region's share of supported firms has declined from 19% in 1996 to 17% in 2006.
- ✦ Micro-enterprises and self-employed activities can be viable from rural locations, but only where the quality of internet access enables rural service providers to interface as effectively with service users as any urban-based provider.
- ✦ In England and Wales, superstores led to the closure of local retail stores at a rate of 50 per week between 1997 and 2002. Retail planning guidelines offers the only protection available to retail and grocery stores operating in market towns.
- ✦ Strengthening the all-Ireland economy involves reducing and removing obstacles to cross border trade working mobility and harmonising of fiscal and legislative policy are vital to the development of a prosperous and equal economy.
- ✦ Since 1995 cross border trade has increased by €1bn, with a 20% increase in the last three years.
- ✦ There is a continuing shortage of highly skilled workers in the Western seaboard. As a possible solution to the problem of graduate retention, an increase in partnerships between third level institutions of technology and the enterprise sector should be encouraged.
- ✦ Only 12% of Irish venture capital was invested in the BMW region in 2007.
- ✦ In Europe, every year 2 million business are started with 90% employing less than five people.
- ✦ In the Western region 38% of the region's enterprises employ between one and two people.
- ✦ With the current crisis in the banking system, more support should be directed at micro-finance to enable small firms and self-employed persons to access capital.
- ✦ In 2007, just 745 (8.1%) of the 9,216 new jobs created in IDA-supported firms were located in counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Clare, Limerick, Kerry. While Galway and Cork accounted for 1,905 (21%) of new jobs created in 2007, the vast bulk of these jobs were concentrated in the Gateways of Galway city and Cork city.
- ✦ The deficit in Foreign Direct Investment has been attributed to lack of critical mass and inadequate infrastructure. As a possible solution a regional cluster policy should be developed.
- ✦ In 2006 only 10.6% of research funding was allocated to the Western region with the National University of Ireland Galway receiving the lion's share of investment²².
- ✦ The western Institutes of Technology need more capital investment to increase their Research and Development capacity through improved support in the Applied Research Enhancement Scheme.
- ✦ Recent research has shown that the environmental goods and services sector will have an estimated global value of \$700 billion by 2010.
- ✦ In order to promote the environmental goods and services sector in a co-ordinated way, there needs to be a green economy strategy for the Western seaboard region

3.1 Locally Traded Services

One of the ways of sustaining local economies in small and medium sized towns is through the support and development of locally traded services. In total, 12% of the workforce in the Western region are employed in retail and wholesale trade. This makes it the third highest sector of employment after construction and manufacturing.

A significant part of locally traded services are small retail and grocery stores, which for the most part buy and sell from local businesses. The report notes the damaging effect of superstores located outside of towns on the local economies of England and Wales: between 1997 and 2002 specialised shops such as bakers, fishmongers, and newsagents closed at a rate of 50 per week. Irish towns and villages have not suffered the same levels of closure as towns in England mainly because of retail planning guidelines introduced in 2000. However, in spite of retail planning guidelines, a number of towns across Western seaboard counties have experienced an erosion of their locally traded services, which has led to the decline of many town centres.

22 Dynamic Regions for a Dynamic Island, Joint Briefing by BMW and WDC p.8

The retail planning guidelines have recently been criticised by the Competition Authority, who described the guidelines as anti-competitive, limiting choice and making prices for consumers higher as a consequence²³. However, based on the experiences of England, the views of the Competition Authority are highly questionable. As a result of the growth of out-of-town superstores in England, small retail and grocery stores have closed, limiting consumer choice. Furthermore, with fluctuating oil prices, the cost of travelling to superstores, will outweigh any savings in the actual cost of products.

The Rapporteur recommends that retail planning guidelines should be maintained and strengthened to ensure that superstores are prevented from adversely affecting retail services in market towns.

Furthermore, it is necessary that market towns in Western seaboard counties develop partnerships through the private and public sector to look at best practice of town management and access expertise at a national and European level. Market towns and the broader rural economy should be given a clearly articulated role by Government in a revised White Paper on Rural Ireland.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **a locally traded services networking programme to maximise the contacts and groups of networks between businesses operating at a local level.**
- ✦ **the creation of Town Centre Partnerships to focus on retailing, competition, tourism, and unemployment through the cooperation of local public and private sector. These Partnerships can be funded through institutions such as the European Social Fund to roll out through office regeneration projects for town centres. A Best Practice Programme should be developed for town centres which would include training and workshops to develop the capacity of town centres and share expertise.**

3.2 Indigenous Enterprises

While there was an increase in employment in firms supported by state agencies between 1996 and 2006, the Western region's share of firms receiving support from state agencies

has declined from 19% in 1996 to 17% in 2006²⁴. Over 72% of all firms operating in the West employ less than 50 people. Generally, smaller businesses have located on the basis of ties to the community. The challenges facing rural enterprises are similar to the challenges facing the Region's economy as a whole: deficiencies in infrastructure, lack of highly educated workforce through low graduate retention and difficulties accessing capital. While infrastructure has been discussed in section 2, the Joint Committee will review in the following sections the possible solutions to the shortage of highly skilled workers and the difficulties accessing capital.

Rural enterprises can play a key role in the development of the rural economy. Micro-enterprises and self-employed activities can be viable from rural locations, but only where the quality of internet access enables rural service providers to compete with urban-based providers²⁵. In a submission presented to the Rapporteur it was reported that two companies in Sligo were forced relocate from more rural areas into more urban areas due to a lack of broadband. S.L Controls moved in 2007 from Ballintogher to Collooney Business Park, while Infacts Limited moved from Strandhill to Cleveragh Business Park on the outskirts of Sligo town. If micro-enterprises are to grow in rural areas, there must be efficient and cost effective broadband services²⁶.

The difficulty in retaining graduates was highlighted in the Section 1. There should be a renewed focus on partnerships between third-level institutions of technology and enterprise. Shannon Development Company is the only enterprise development body to have a third level development partnership in Ireland. An example of the third level partnership is the Kerry Technology Park partnership with Tralee IT, which has over 3,500 students and offers courses in Diploma, Degree and post-graduate studies. Through its relationship with the Institute of Technology, businesses can avail of a number of facilities such as state-of-the-art computer facilities, engineering and wet laboratories, joint research programmes and student internship and work placement schemes. Another key attraction to the Technology Park is access to Kerry International Airport, which is located just 12 miles from Tralee. The Kerry Technology Park is a Shannon Development Knowledge Network location. With the exception of the partnership between Kerry Technology Park and Tralee IT,

²³ See Competition Authority Grocery Monitor Report September 2009

²⁴ Forfás Annual Employment Survey 2007

²⁵ NESC Report The Irish Economy in the Early 21st Century p.8

²⁶ For recommendations on Broadband see Part 1 Section C1

the remaining ITs in the Western region have yet to develop strategic partnerships with industry and commerce in their own area of the same size or scale as that of Tralee IT. The benefit of such a partnership is it develops industry with education: enterprises are only allowed to locate in the business park if they meet faculty needs.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **partnerships between third level institutions and business parks along the lines of that between Kerry Technology Park and Tralee IT. Such partnerships should reflect the traditional strengths of the IT's faculties and specify the criteria for the types of businesses which locate in those business parks;**
- ✦ **broader networking between third level institutions and small and medium enterprises should be encouraged;**
- ✦ **extend placement schemes in companies based in western counties for undergraduates.**

A model example of third-level partnership as a method of tackling the loss of creative and young talent is the Combined Universities of Cornwall (CUC). The project involves a partnership of the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, Falmouth College of Arts, the Open University, the College of St Mark and St John, Cornwall College, Truro College and Penwith College. Economic regeneration is central to the project, which now offers over 400 university courses which are being pioneered in conjunction with local businesses that will build towards the economic and social needs of the county. The success of Combined Universities of Cornwall (CUC) was also recognised by the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hubner, during her visit to Cornwall in May 2006. She felt that Combined Universities of Cornwall "responds to the demand for a major higher educational institution that will not only stem the 'brain drain' but will even attract talent and knowledge into the region from outside, becoming an economic hub that will generate practical and commercial spin-offs as it grows and develops". The possibility of establishing a similar combined universities cross-border initiative for the north-west should be examined.

The Rapporteur recommends the examination of the feasibility of creating a combined university of the north-west, which would look into the feasibility of creating a cross-border university institution with economic regeneration as its core aim.

Another method of encouraging entrepreneurial activity is through promoting women in rural enterprise. Female entrepreneurs have faced a number of barriers in accessing finance, lacking confidence and inadequate rural business support. A number of women networking organisations operate under county enterprise boards. These agencies tend to be limited to training and mentoring. In England, networking organisations such as WIRE operate at a national level, offering rural women in business the opportunity to work together. WIRE is supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) and promotes women in rural enterprise through networking schemes, workshops and financial support. A more expanded programme such as WIRE should be followed in Ireland through the county enterprise boards.

The Rapporteur recommends the expansion of women enterprise networks operating under county enterprise boards. There should be a more comprehensive strategy to promote women in rural enterprise with the goal of connecting and supporting women in rural enterprises and encouraging women to become entrepreneurs in their rural areas. Such an agency could have the capacity to grant micro-finance start-up funds.

Businesses will often find it difficult to keep up to date with developments and initiatives taking place in their area. In the Netherlands, the Municipality of Eindhoven established Business Points to ensure that businesses are informed of any development plans for their area through developing a network between local people and businesses. The Business Point also acts as an information centre for businesses if they have any plans for developments or wish to carry out a business analysis. A similar scheme for Western seaboard counties could enable business to connect to skilled services and operate more efficiently. Such a service could attract businesses to the Region.

The Rapporteur recommends that a number of Business Points should be established in the Western seaboard counties to ensure that businesses are informed in any development plans for their area through developing a network between local people and businesses. This scheme would operate along the same lines as the Business Points operating in the Netherlands.

3.3 Accessing Capital

Access to finance through venture capital is recognised as crucial in the early stages of development for enterprises. Despite an investment of €1 billion by the Irish venture capital industry, only 12% of total funding up to 2007 was invested in the Border Midlands and Western (BMW) region. The Border counties received only 0.6% of total funding. Spatial proximity to investors may be the best way of developing relationships between promoters and investors. However, in the absence of private investment, public sector investment can intervene to make up for the shortfall. Larger enterprises tend to receive funding from large enterprise funding agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta or the Shannon Development company whereas smaller enterprises receive funding from Leader or County Enterprise Boards.

As Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and microbusinesses can play a key role in developing the economies of rural areas, it is vital that financial support from state agencies is rolled out more effectively. County Enterprise Boards have expressed frustration at the current grant structure, which is seen as inadequate in meeting business needs or responding rapidly to changing market demands. The current grant structure for county enterprise boards, which is now in place for over a decade, has set grant aid levels which are too low and quotas which are too rigid. Employment grant aid has remained at €7,500 for the past decade despite increases in the minimum wage whereas quotas relating to the number of businesses that are approved for funding has been criticised for being too rigid.

The Rapporteur recommends that County Enterprise Board support schemes should be revised with increased employment grants, stock grants, cashflow support grants, internal efficiency supports, knowledge development supports, and the removal of the matching fund requirement.

With the current financial crisis in the banking sector, coupled with rising interest rates, SMEs will be facing significant challenges in accessing capital from banks. It is necessary for the state to intervene in the form of a loan guarantee scheme for SMEs. There are a number of SME loan guarantee schemes operating in European Member States, which are supported by the European Investment Bank. In England, there is a Government business loan guarantee scheme which secures bank loans for young and growing businesses, covering 75% of

each qualifying loan. The scheme provides for sums of £10,000 to £250,000. The loan can be repaid over any period between two and ten years. Interest rates are decided between the parties and there is a choice of fixed or variable interest rates. There is a 2% annual fee, payable to the Government. A Loan Guarantee Scheme could be created for the Western seaboard region, which could be targeted at enterprises based in the Region. The advantage of a regional scheme would be to increase awareness of regional entrepreneurial activity while at the same time ensuring that western coastal enterprises get proper access to capital.

The Rapporteur recommends that a State Financed Loan Guarantee Scheme in conjunction with the European Investment Bank for SMEs operating in the western coastal seaboard with an annual turnover of no greater than €5 million. Under the Scheme 75% of the loan would be guaranteed by the state with a choice of fixed or variable interest rates. The scheme would provide for funds of between €20,000 and €300,000 to be repaid over a period of between two and ten years.

A further or alternative initiative which could encourage enterprise development is through the support of microenterprise finance. In Europe, every year 2 million business are started with 90% employing less than five people. As microfirms play a significant role in development of rural economies and given their flexibility in responding to changes in global economy, more focus should be given to supporting microfinance institutions. Microfinance is the provision of finance of less than €25k to individuals who wish to start and develop their business. First Step is Ireland's only microenterprise finance institution. First Step has to date assisted over 1,500 projects, which has created over 3,000 job opportunities. The majority of First Step customers are located in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), however. Supporting microfinance agencies should be given real consideration to enable this type of support in the Western seaboard region.

The Rapporteur recommends increased support to microfinance institutions with the target of developing offices in the Western seaboard region.

In relation to agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, more regional focus is needed for funding business and enterprise. Enterprise Ireland has a target of 50% of its funding for start-up companies to be invested outside of Dublin. The vast bulk of the 50% is concentrated in the large urban centres of Cork

city and Galway city. On the basis of more balanced regional development, agencies such as Enterprise Ireland should be given specific targets for the regions rather than for Dublin and the rest of the state.

The Rapporteur recommends that targets for enterprise support agencies such as Enterprise Ireland should be set at regional and sub-regional levels.

3.4 Regional Development Bodies

Shannon Development Company was established in 1959 to promote Shannon International Airport. The Shannon Development company is a model example of a company that prioritises sustainable economic development in the Shannon Region. Shannon Development is dissimilar to Enterprise Ireland in that it uses its property portfolio to stimulate activity. It is been successful in promoting business parks such as the Kerry Technology and the Shannon Free Zone. Shannon Free Zone employs 7,200 people with 110 companies located there, which have generated over €3.2 billion in exports per annum²⁷.

Shannon Development is completing a master plan for the regeneration of the Shannon Free Zone. The aim of the plan is to ensure Shannon Free Zone's further enhancement as one of Ireland's premier locations for modern internationally traded manufacturing and international services.

Given the success of the Shannon Development company in terms of promoting industry and enterprise, the continuation of the Development Company is fundamental to the regional development of that area.

The Rapporteur recommends that a similar self-sustaining state agency with a property portfolio should be developed for the south-west, north-west, and western counties to promote larger entrepreneurial activity at a local level.

3.5 Foreign Direct Investment

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has long been recognised as a crucial source of employment in the Irish economy. In an increasingly competitive global market, Ireland faces serious challenges in attracting FDI. From a regional perspective FDI remains heavily concentrated in the Greater Dublin Area. The IDA's regional strategy in the current National Development Plan states that *"IDA Ireland's plans align its regional strategy with the structure of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). This is designed to support national policy and a Gateway approach to regional development"*²⁸. The empirical evidence however, demonstrates that IDA is falling short of its own goals: despite targets set by the IDA, the Border Midlands and Western (BMW) region has actually experienced a decline in the numbers employed in foreign-owned firms over the 1998-2004 period²⁹.

In 2007, just 745 (8.1%) of the 9,216 new jobs created in IDA-supported firms were located in counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Clare, Limerick, Kerry. While Galway and Cork accounted for 1,905 (21%) of new jobs created in 2007, the vast bulk of these jobs were concentrated in the Gateways of Galway city and Cork city. During the period 2000-2006, the BMW Region received 36% of the total IDA promoted new 'greenfield' jobs from FDI. This was 14% below the IDA target of 50%.

The large deficit in FDI between the Western seaboard region and eastern coastal region has been attributed to the physical infrastructural disparities, the lack of third level infrastructure and lack of critical mass³⁰. However, it has equally been argued that many of the FDI projects are small enough to be located in towns in the Western seaboard Region. While the IDA target of 50% of new 'greenfield' jobs fell short, targets such as these create more focus for bodies such as the IDA.

The Rapporteur recommends that:

- ◆ **a regional foreign direct investment target should be set for the Western seaboard region and its sub regions.**
- ◆ **there should be a Western seaboard regional review by Forfás of its capacity to attract foreign direct investment and the measures which need to be taken at a regional level to improve its attractiveness.**

27 Shannon Development Company '10th annual report 2007'

28 National Development Plan Chapter 4 page 87

29 Forfás (2004), Annual Employment Survey 2004

30 See section 2

- ✦ **A new networking regional policy promoted between small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and multinational sectors such as internationally traded services.**

It is self-evident that addressing infrastructure gaps between towns and large urban centres in the West of Ireland while promoting the two international airports is central to addressing the deficit. As a solution to the perceived 'lack of critical mass', a cluster policy could be developed for the Region, which would pool together resources. Cluster policies can leave areas and regions particularly vulnerable if there is a downturn in that particular market, with the Donegal textile industry as a prime example. To ensure that there is no adverse impact on the environment, any cluster policy for the Western seaboard region must take account of minimum open space or resource land requirements, design guidelines to assure compatibility with rural character and minimize visual impact e.g. buffering rural roads to ensure visual compatibility. Cluster policies should also make provision to protect historical properties, historical landscape and archaeological sites.

The Rapporteur recommends that a regional cluster policy for the Western seaboard should be developed e.g. for the renewable energy industry, which would target a specific sector and make recommendations on third level and physical infrastructure requirements to promote such clusters. A cluster policy must however, set specific impact assessment criteria in relation to minimum open space requirements, comparability with rural landscape and protection of historic and environmental sites.

3.6 Research and Development and Innovation

The deficit between the Western seaboard and eastern seaboard in Research and Development investment is considerable. In 2006 only 10.6% of research funding was allocated to the Western region with National University Ireland, Galway receiving the vast bulk of this investment³¹. The BMW Assembly argues that the low level of research funding is influenced by the number of university research places in the BMW Region, which are proportionally less than in the S&E Region. The Western seaboard has only one university in comparison to six for the east coast. The

Institutions of Technology in the western coastal region are also disadvantaged by their lack of infrastructure in attracting R&D funding. While funding programmes such as the Applied Research Enhancement Scheme are welcome developments, further support is necessary to develop ITs along the Western seaboard.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **investment projects to strengthen the R&D capacity of the ITs with the objective of setting minimum targets for R&D in regions and sub-regions.**
- ✦ **developing a special series of awareness/ training seminars on manufacturing companies on how to manage product lines (new product development processes, product and customer range management, intellectual property rights and technology transfer). The seminars should include a range of programmes varying from short evening introductory sessions to workshops to detailed training sessions on specific topics and covering the range of topics.**
- ✦ **supporting the Western Development Commission calls for a Regional Knowledge Initiative focused such an initiative in the Western seaboard region.**

3.7 All Ireland Economy

Partition has been and continues to be wasteful and inefficient for the Irish Economy as a whole. It involves duplication of government and public service structures, imposes unnecessary administrative burdens on businesses both side of the border, and creates barriers, economic inequalities and reduced competitiveness particularly in the border counties. Strengthening the all-Ireland economy, reducing and removing obstacles to cross-border trade including working mobility and harmonizing of fiscal and legislative policy are vital to the development of a robust economy north and south, capable of competing in an ever competitive global market.

Recent trading figures would support the continued emphasis on strengthening the all Ireland economy. Since 1995 cross border trade has increased by €1 billion, with a 20% increase in the last three years³².

The potential for cross border trade and economic co-

31 Dynamic Regions for a Dynamic Island, Joint Briefing by BMW and WDC p.8

32 Ref Intertrade Ireland Corporate Plan 2008-2010

operation is recognized in recent policy documents. The National Development Plan 2007-2013 states that *"the Government will pursue collaborative actions to address the competitive challenges facing both parts of the island"*³³, while the Northern Ireland Budget 2008-2011 declares that *"co-operation and collaboration will deliver significant economies of scale for both economies"*³⁴.

In the recent Intertrade Ireland 'Corporate Plan' it was reported that *"greater cross border cooperation has the potential to generate economies of scale, create gains in trade and investment promote wider economic benefits of knowledge transfer via networks and clusters (so called agglomeration economies) reduce market failures caused by imperfect flow of relative business information, deliver more balanced regional development"*.

The Rapporteur recommends that:

- ✦ **the Government needs to develop and implement an all-Ireland Economic Development plan to address the deficit of infrastructure and reduce inefficiencies of scale and duplication of services, in particular government agencies.**
- ✦ **the state should maximise the use of EU funding for cross-border trade and address the need for an all-Ireland research and development (R&D) strategy including extra assistance to small and medium enterprises and new businesses to develop business plans for R&D.**

Such policies should be targeted at reversing the systemic neglect of rural and disadvantaged areas and the economic inequalities created by the border, generate job creation, improve global competitiveness.

The Rapporteur recommends that consideration be given to implementing recommendations in the recent Freight Transport Report for the Island of Ireland and the Mapping Study of Research and Technology Development Centres on the Island of Ireland Study.

In addition, the Rapporteur recommends continued and improved support for Intertrade Ireland with a view to expanding its programmes to reach western and south-western counties.

3.8 Green Economy

There are a number of opportunities in the growing environmental goods and services sector. Recent research has shown that the environmental goods sector will have an estimated global value of \$700 billion by 2010. In renewable energies the Western seaboard has significant potential to not only meet its energy needs, but to become a net exporter of renewable energy³⁵. With the Western seaboard region's massive resources in renewable energy, other related sectors should be encouraged. The development of information technology in the development of renewable energy should be promoted as a matter of priority. There are also a number of services that should be explored. The majority of energy efficiency management services are foreign-owned. The Western region should encourage the development of indigenous waste management firms as well as encouraging indigenous environmental consultancy firms.

Another key area for the Western seaboard region is improving energy efficiency in the construction of buildings and homes using technologies within the fabric of new and existing buildings. In order to promote the environmental goods sector in a co-ordinated way, there needs to be a green economy strategy for the Western seaboard region to encourage the development of renewable energies, technologies and services.

The Rapporteur recommends the creation of a regional green economy strategy to be drafted by the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources. Such a strategy would mandate enterprise agencies to target investment in the environmental goods sector. The strategy would focus on both encouraging foreign direct investment and promoting small and medium sized environmental goods firms.

33 Chapter 5 All-Ireland Co-operation pg 96

34 para 5.9, pg 52

35 See Chapter 5, Section 5.6

Chapter 4: Road, rail and air transport

Key Messages

- ✦ Weak infrastructure is a central barrier to economic development and access to services.
- ✦ In road infrastructure spending and policy development the east coast of Ireland continues to be prioritised while the Western seaboard continues to be neglected.
- ✦ Of the 19 national road projects in construction at the end of December 2007, just 2 road projects were located in the Western seaboard region, amounting to 75kms out of 458kms of national roads.
- ✦ As a result of the deficit in public transport investment in the Western seaboard Region only 2.3% of people use buses or trains when travelling to work.
- ✦ The Western Rail Corridor represents only 0.5% of projected spending in Transport 21, increasing to just 1% if the Claremorris to Collooney line were to be included.
- ✦ Because of increased traffic congestion from new commuter towns and the growth of Ireland West Airport Knock, the Claremorris to Collooney line should be re-examined by an independent panel.
- ✦ By extending the Western Rail Corridor to Derry, the 6 largest cities outside of Dublin would be linked in a complete rail network.
- ✦ The Atlantic Corridor should be designated a Sustainable Transport Corridor comprising balanced and sustainable joint road / rail infrastructure development in a single package.
- ✦ There is a need for council road departments to be transformed into sustainable transport departments in light of the current economic and environmental challenges facing the Region.
- ✦ Capital investment alone cannot deliver good quality public transport- there is a need to focus on other key elements such as increased frequency, reduced journey times, low cost fares and higher standards of customer care.
- ✦ Public transport must compete with private transport through the use of integrated tickets, feeder minibuses to train stations and the provision of secure parking at train stations.
- ✦ Urban bus services also must take account of recent demographic changes, which have led to demand outstripping supply on certain bus services.
- ✦ The quality of conventional services under the Rural Transport Scheme has been described in certain areas as 'patchy'. In certain places, community buses are only able to operate on a weekly basis while many rural transport programmes only operate in their catchment and do not cover county boundaries.
- ✦ The Rural Transport Scheme should provide services to commuters, create more demand-responsive taxi systems and give more authority to county councils.

4.1 Role of Infrastructure

High quality infrastructure is fundamental for the regions in attracting investment, developing indigenous businesses and for the overall quality of life. In a 2006 Forfás report the critical importance of infrastructure to regional development was identified:

"Weak infrastructure in the regions presents a barrier to their economic development. The key mechanism for enabling regional development is to enhance their infrastructure. Regions will attract enterprise only if they have the infrastructure and facilities that allow them to compete with Dublin and international regions for trade and investment"³⁶.

4.2 Roads

The overwhelming majority of transport in Ireland for both the public and business sectors is through the national road network. As rural areas have even more limited access to public transport services, the public and business sectors are for the most part dependent on the quality of roads. There is an over-dependence on the road network in the Western region: 77% of the Western seaboard region work force travel to work by car, in comparison with 70% for the rest of the state³⁷. Consequently, road quality is not only fundamental for employment and competitiveness but it is also vital to access public services such as health and education.

36 Forfás Enterprise Strategy Group 'Ahead of the Curve'

37 CSO, Census of Population 2006, Volume 12, Table 6

Despite the necessity for high quality road infrastructure, the road network in the West of Ireland still lags behind³⁸. Many of the national roads and regional roads are deficient. The BMW region continues to suffer from underspending on national roads. Road expenditure for the seven year period up to the end of 2006 in the Border Midlands and Western region was 82% of the spending planned in the previous National Development Plan in comparison to 120% for the Southern and Eastern region.

Figure 1 Road Network Envisaged by Transport 21 for 2015

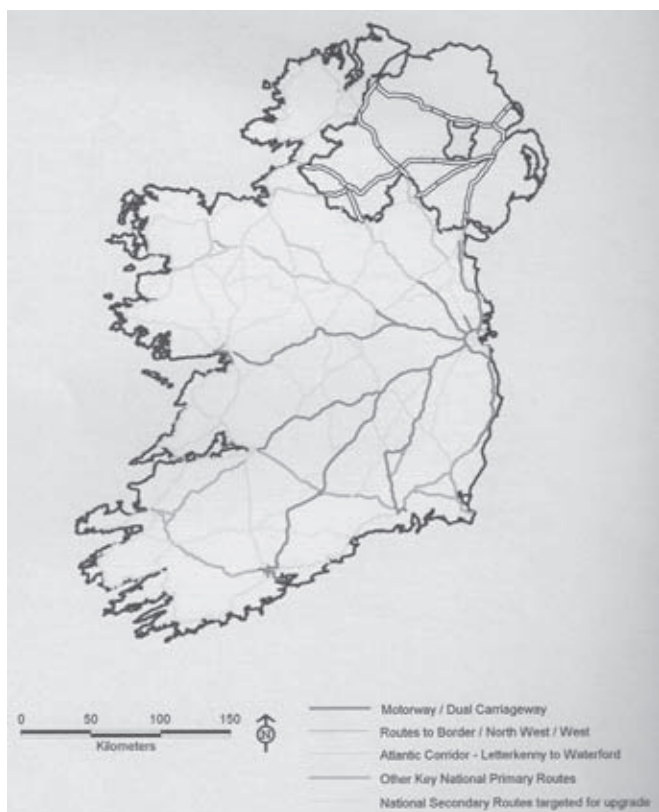


Figure 1 above illustrates the road network system for the island of Ireland as envisaged by Transport 21 for 2015. The Intertrade Ireland report 'Spatial Strategies of the Island of Ireland' states that the *"the pattern of investment in the road networks in Northern Ireland and Ireland is tending to concentrate the higher capacity and higher speed routes along the corridors between Dublin and the regional cities in the West and South and along the Eastern seaboard. A correspondingly lower level of capacity and lower speeds are being provided outside these areas and to the North West in particular"*. While the completion of the Major Inter Urban (MIU) routes will benefit the Western region, it is clear from Figure 1 above that the disparities between the

Greater Dublin Area and the Western seaboard region will only increase over the next decade.

The N15, N17, N18, N20, N25 Atlantic Road Corridor is the only major road infrastructure project for inter-regional infrastructure within the West. The project which proposes to link Waterford with Letterkenny via Cork, Limerick, Galway and Sligo has been described as one of the most important projects in creating a counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area. Under Transport 21, the projected date for completion of the Corridor is 2015. The project is set to be prioritised in 2010 with the completion of the MIU routes. Transport 21 pledges to implement "a major upgrading" of the N15, N17, N18, N20, N25 serving the Atlantic Corridor, while the current Programme for Government pledges to upgrade the corridor to motorway status. The N15 Ballyshannon-Bundoran Bypass, the N18 Ennis Bypass, the N25 Kinsalebeg Realignment and the N25/27 Kinsale Road Interchange have been completed, while the N7 Limerick Tunnel, the N25 Cable stayed Bridge and the N25 Waterford City Bypass are works in progress. There are over 19 sections of the Atlantic Corridor, however, which have yet to commence³⁹.

Apart from the Atlantic Corridor project, there are other national routes and regional roads within the Western region that require upgrading for the development of industry and fostering of enterprise. Dylan Henderson, author of *'EU Regional Innovation Strategies'*, estimates that investment in roads, by reducing 'urban primacy' or capital-city dominance, can add between 0.5 and 0.7 points to the overall economy's annual growth rate⁴⁰. For the long term sustainability of smaller economic centres, linkages between smaller centres and the larger hubs and gateways is necessary for balanced regional development.

Almost €1.8 billion was invested by the Government in the national roads network in 2007. Of the 19 national road projects in construction at the end of December 2007, just 2 road projects were in the Western seaboard, amounting to 75kms out of 458kms of national roads under construction at that time⁴¹. The lack of investment in the national road network of the West of Ireland has led to road deficiencies. Examples of road projects which remain incomplete and deficient are the N5 section between Longford Town and Westport, the N71 Bandon Town Bypass, the N16/A4 Sligo Road to Enniskillen, the N60 Roscommon to Castlebar, the N84/N85 Galway to

38 WDC Submission to the Consultation on Ireland's National Development Plan p.43

39 See Appendix 2

40 Henderson 'EU Regional Innovation Strategies'

41 Department of Transport Annual Report, 2007 p.14.

Castlebar and Ballina, the N22 Ballincollig West to Ballyvourney West and the N71 Kenmare to Killarney.

The Department of Transport and the National Roads Authority (NRA) continue to prioritise the eastern corridor at the expense of regions such as the Western seaboard. Given the intrinsic institutional discrimination that seems to operate in state departments and authorities, a more transparent form of regional development proofing should be imposed on state institutions when developing policies or carrying out their duties. Such a legal obligation exists in the north of Ireland in the form of equality proofing, which is provided for in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, 1998. Equality Impact Assessments are made and publicised by public bodies to ascertain whether their policies have an adverse impact on groups mentioned in section 75. The function of such an assessment is to make policy development a more transparent process and to ensure that institutional discrimination is addressed. Given the perceived institutional discrimination against counties on the Western seaboard public bodies should be required to publish similar regional development impact assessments when drafting policies.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **the publication of Regional Development Impact Assessment by the Department of Transport should be made mandatory where policy for the road and rail network is being initiated.**
- ✦ **that the Atlantic Road Corridor, from Waterford to Letterkenny, should be a seamless dual carriageway built under public finance.**

4.3 Passenger Rail

The legacy of underinvestment on public transport has resulted in an overuse of private transport in all regions. The West in particular has suffered from underspending on public transport, which has led to the closure of rail lines, low quality services and an over dependency on the car. As a result of this legacy, heavy traffic congestion has built up in around the Gateways of the Region. In the Gateway city of Galway 46,000 cars enter the city each day giving rise to major delays, which are estimated to cost over €68 million per year⁴². With increasing green house emissions, fluctuating fuel

prices and traffic congestion on the national road network, current Government policy prioritising private transport is unsustainable. Transport emissions have increased by 161% since 1990, which has led to the threat of ever increasing Kyoto agreement fines of up to €1 billion and adverse effects in climate change such as flooding and storms⁴³.

Yet in spite of the obvious need for capital investment in public transport infrastructure, the West continues to suffer from under spending on planned projects. Between 2000 and 2006 only 55.5% of planned public transport spending was delivered in the Border Midlands and Western (BMW) region in comparison with 105% for the Southern & Eastern region. In the overall public transport budget in the National Development Plan 2000-2006 only 9% was allocated to the BMW region with the remaining 91% for the S&E regions. Large parts of the Western region such as the north-west have no rail service and the quality of the public transport service as a whole is poor. As a result of the deficit in public transport investment only 2.3% of people in the Western seaboard Region use buses or trains when travelling to work⁴⁴.

Historical under-investment in the rail network of Ireland has resulted in the national railway network's inability to respond to changes in needs, to deliver high quality services in a timely fashion and to maximise its potential to contribute to economic growth.

Figure 2 below illustrates the current rail network for the island. The north-west in particular has suffered from historic underinvestment in rail services, which has resulted in the closure of railway lines. Of the railway lines that have survived along the Western seaboard, the quality of rail is very low. Almost 80% of Iarnród Éireann's (IÉ's) passenger routes are single track, the only double track routes are the Dublin to Belfast and Dublin to Cork lines. Single track is said to 'severely constrain' the potential capacity of the railway- capacity is restricted by the availability of passing places and the journey times between destinations are increased⁴⁵. Single track rail is also far more exposed to unreliability.

The one major inter-regional rail project for the western counties under Transport 21 is the Western Rail Corridor. A fully completed Rail Corridor from Sligo to Limerick is set to open up 14 additional smaller/medium sized towns as well as linking

42 The Western Rail Corridor, A critical Element of Transport 21. A paper presented by Frank Dawson to the Sixth Annual Conference of Enterprise Kiltullagh Ltd.

43 See generally Stern Report

44 Western Development Commission Key Statistics p.58.

45 Booz Allen Hamilton Annex A

the region with Ireland West Airport Knock. The Rail Corridor is necessary both for balanced regional development on the basis of customer demand. Frank Dawson Director of Services Galway County Council argues that the demand for the Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway corridor is almost equal to the combined demand on the Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway to Dublin corridors⁴⁶.

Figure 2: Rail Map Ireland, 2008



The Rail Corridor can be broadly divided into four basic sections of line. Table 1 lists these sections, the distances involved, the capital costs and the average cost per mile. This data is taken from the Faber Maunsell capital costs study.

The commitment to the Western Rail Corridor represents 0.5% of projected spending in Transport 21 i.e. less than

Section	Distance	Capital	Cost (per mile)
Ennis to Athenry	36 miles	€74.7m	€2.1m
Athenry to Tuam	15.5 miles	€34.7m	€2.2m
Tuam to Claremorris	17 miles	€58.9m	€3.5m
C/morris to Collooney	46.25 miles	€197.4m	€4.3m

TABLE 1

46 The Western Rail Corridor, A critical Element of Transport 21. A paper presented by Frank Dawson to the Sixth Annual Conference of Enterprise Kiltullagh Ltd.

€200m from a budget of €3,400 million. Or to put it another way, it represents just 5 weeks expenditure on the National Roads Programme. To include Sligo would have brought the percentage to 1%. The Ennis to Athenry stretch is due to be completed in April 2009, with Athenry-Tuam- Claremorris scheduled for completion in 2014. The restoration of the line from Tuam to Claremorris would link up the WRC with the Castlebar/Westport and Ballina lines and thereby link these Mayo hub towns with Galway and the cities in Munster.

While the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) is a welcome development, there are obvious limitations on the project from the outset. The Tuam to Claremorris section is not scheduled for completion until 2014, while there is no timeframe or commitment for the completion of the Claremorris to Collooney section of the WRC.

In the 2005 McCann Report to the Minister for Transport, it was decided that on the Claremorris to Collooney section: *“expenditure of this order would be very difficult to justify and I have to say that the case for its restoration, as things stand, is weak except on the grounds of balanced regional development.”* The Report concluded that *“the viability of restoring this section of line should be reviewed in three years to see whether the objective conditions for line restoration have changed”*.

The findings of the McCann Report on the Claremorris to Collooney line are open to question: no consideration was given to traffic numbers from Ireland West Airport Knock and there was no evaluation of increased congestion in and around Sligo Town. Furthermore, conditions since the report have changed such as the growth of the Gateway city of Sligo, the continued expansion of Ireland West Airport Knock and traffic congestion from commuter towns such as Tubbercurry and Swinford.

It is now three years since the McCann report. The Department of Transport has indicated in a meeting with the Rapporteur that no review will be made of the Claremorris to Collooney section in the near future. However, in light of the inadequate evaluation of the Claremorris-Collooney and the increased demand on the road network since the publication of the McCann Report, an urgent review of the fourth phase of the WRC should be carried out by the Department of Transport.

The Rapporteur recommends that the Department of Transport authorises an independent review of the

Claremorris to Colooney line as a matter of priority.

As Figure 2 above demonstrates, rail services in the north-west are non-existent. Donegal which, at the turn of the 20th century, had 220 miles of rail linking the economic centres of Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane, has had all its railway lines closed with the exception of heritage services. But while the rail services for the north-west have been extinct for decades, there exists real potential to revive the north-west rail network by continuing the Western Rail Corridor to the Gateway town of Letterkenny and city of Derry.

The city of Derry along with Letterkenny form the economic core of the north-west. Letterkenny with an estimated population of 17,586 is the only Gateway in the NSS with no rail link. The natural hinterland of the City of Derry is Donegal and Derry airport serves as the main international access point for Donegal county. The relationship between the two economic centres was highlighted in the National Spatial Strategy, which declared Letterkenny-Derry to be a linked Gateway.

With a complete rail circuit, the 6 largest cities outside of Dublin would be linked together in a single rail network. The economic, social and environmental benefits of a complete rail circuit for the Island would be considerable. Developing a modern high quality rail service in the north-west would make the area more attractive for investment, develop all-Ireland trade, encourage tourism and help to reduce the public's dependency on private transport. Creating a rail connection from Waterford as far as Derry would enhance inter regional trade and act as a significant counterbalance to the Greater Dublin Area.

The Rapporteur recommends the establishment of a joint Assembly-Oireachtas committee to evaluate the findings of a study being produced by the Department of Regional Development in the north on the development of the rail network in the northwest. The proposed Derry to Letterkenny railway line, with the extension to Sligo and the proposed link from the North West to Dublin should also be reviewed.

As Figure 3 below demonstrates, there were a number of light rail lines connecting towns in Western seaboard counties at the turn of the 20th century. In West Cork and Kerry towns such as Dingle, Kenmare and Bantry were connected to the larger urban populations through light rail. While these light rail lines fell into disuse, there now exists through emerging rail technology the potential to reopen a number of lines on a cost effective basis. Using bus-type vehicles, adapted to run on

rails, Ultra Light Rail (ULR) is a lower speed low cost alternative to light rail on lightly patronised routes. ULR is designed to be the natural, zero-emission, next-generation successor to the diesel bus as fossil fuels are phased out. The passenger capacity of the trams is therefore designed to be similar to the standard city buses currently in operation all over the world. It is estimated that ultra light rail costs only 10% of the cost of conventional light railway per kilometre⁴⁷. By re-establishing local lines using modern technology, the rail network would become more complete and enable further growth in terms of passenger demand on the pre-existing lines.

Figure 3: Historical Rail Map of Ireland



Given the large numbers of tourists who visit the south-west and the relative low cost of ULR, it would seem preferable that such a scheme to reopen the disused railway lines using ULR should be piloted in West Cork and Kerry. Firstly, as a matter of priority, all disused railway lines should be safeguarded while an evaluation is made in relation to reopening those lines.

The Rapporteur recommends that all former disused railway lines be safeguarded as a matter of priority, while the reopening of such lines is reviewed, using emerging low cost technology railway lines with pilot schemes in counties West Cork and Kerry.

4.4 Freight

⁴⁷ Skinner, Ultra Light Rail – the Fast Track to Fuel Cells, 2006

The Irish rail freight market is one of the smallest in Europe, accounting for approximately 4% of the total national freight task in comparison to the EU average of 8%⁴⁸. Bulk freight haulage is a key element of the rail freight business accounting for approximately half of the total rail freight volume. As a result of the low level of freight usage in Ireland, the environmental and congestion benefits of rail freight transport are largely foregone in Ireland.

Similarly to public rail services, freight has suffered through decades of underinvestment. However, with advances in technology, the potential to revive freight in the Western Seaboard Region is significant. The development of new technologies such as the MiniModal system, which uses smaller “mini containers”, offers unparalleled flexibility with loading and unloading. There have also been innovations in demountable containers: these containers handle a variety of loads which can be transferred with ease to conventional articulated lorries⁴⁹.

In a submission to the Western Inter-County Railway Committee Group, Mayo Industries advised that they alone produce 11,000 containers annually for export, worth €3 billion. This includes 30% of the world’s Coca Cola concentrate produced in Ballina. The cargo is currently transported on the road and is increasingly being routed through Waterford Port. Mayo Industries have expressed a deep felt interest in using the rail service and a completed Western Rail Corridor (WRC) would provide the most direct route to Waterford.

It is widely believed that with the introduction of the increased train frequency through Kildare due to higher volumes of passenger services to Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Galway, Midlands and Mayo – combined with the traffic of empty passenger trains to and from the new service depot in Portlaoise – there will no longer be path space for the current or future growth of Timber and Norfolk Line container traffic via Kildare.

The obvious solution is to avail of the opportunity identified by the McCann Report to open the full Ennis-Claremorris Section and divert and grow the Mayo to Waterford freight line via the Western Rail Corridor.

The Rapporteur recommends that freight transport

48 Booz p.175.

49 Guckian National Transport Corridor Submission 2004 p.6

becomes a key element of the Atlantic Sustainable Transport Corridor⁵⁰, which could through the developments in freight technology deliver predictable, cost effective and efficient transportation of products. Recently closed freight transport lines should therefore be reviewed in light of developments in freight technology and the heavy traffic congestion on the national road network.

4.5 Road and Rail Integration

One of the problems in current transport policy at local and national level is the sporadic nature in which road and rail projects for the Western seaboard counties are delivered. Road projects are treated in isolation, while the overall policy approach is dualistic in nature, i.e. road versus rail. At a local level, county councils are structured in such a way as to focus solely on road infrastructure. The lack of any local responsibility for public transport infrastructure prevents local authorities from introducing legal or financial measures to move the public towards public transport. The results of such an approach is to have uncoordinated transportation infrastructure in many of the Western seaboard counties. A bi-modal approach to road and rail infrastructure should be adopted by designating the Atlantic Corridor a Sustainable Transport Corridor, comprising balanced and sustainable joint road/rail infrastructure development in a single package. This would operate with the pre-existing transportation corridor framework to create a corridor going from Waterford in the south-east up to Derry in the north-west. A number of road and rail projects at both county and regional level would receive equal priority. Figure 4 below illustrates the route of a complete Atlantic Sustainable Transport Corridor. We should also consider devolving public transport to local authorities to ensure that there is better coordination of the different physical infrastructure investment projects.

50 see page 90



Figure 4 Atlantic Sustainable Transport Corridor

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **that the Atlantic Corridor be designated a Sustainable Transport Corridor.** The purpose of such a strategy would be to ensure that both high quality road infrastructure and high quality rail infrastructure receive equal priority in the delivery of infrastructure in the western coastal region. The overall objectives of the Sustainable Transport Corridor would be to address the Region's economic, environmental and social needs, bringing about reductions in traffic congestion and CO2 emissions by linking the Gateway city of Waterford with the north-west Gateway city of Derry.
- ✦ **local county council road departments should be transformed into sustainable transport departments** which would be given the role of developing sustainable transportation within their counties and to ensure an integrated approach to road and rail transport.

4.6 Public Transport

Capital investment alone will not deliver a modern railway system for the Western seaboard region. The Strategic Rail Review highlighted a number of other key considerations

such as increased frequency, reduced journey times, improved accessibility, improved reliability and higher standards of customer care. Improving train services can have a significant impact on demand and through enhanced performance and service reliability; the numbers of passengers using the service could steadily increase for the West⁵¹.

Commuter rail services must be taken account of with reliable early morning services along with later evening services. Ticket prices need to be controlled to ensure that public transport remains affordable. Price discrepancies exist between the Western region and the Greater Dublin Area: Maynooth to Dublin is 50% cheaper than the Ballymote to Sligo service, despite both journeys almost being the same distance⁵².

One of the central reasons for car dominance in the Western seaboard region is its 'door-to-door' capacity. The principal barriers to door-to-door public transport are segregated ticketing, inconvenient timetabling, lack of bus connections, lack of secure car or cycle parking and inconvenient pedestrian and cycle access. Through the use of integrated tickets 'Smartcards' (e.g. Oyster), feeder minibuses to stations and the provision of secure parking facilities, public transport can compete with many of the attractive features of private transport

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **integrated ticket systems using smartcards (e.g. Oyster);**
- ✦ **feeder minibuses from surrounding towns to train stations;**
- ✦ **the promotion of commercially shared taxi services operating at rail stations on the Western region;**
- ✦ **provision of parking facilities for both car and bicycle at rail stations;**
- ✦ **an audit of bus services and timetables to take into account changing demographics in areas due to recent housing developments.**

4.7 Rural Transport

In the 2002 National Rural Transport Survey, 380,000 people described their transport system as inadequate for their needs. Projections indicate 450,000 rural dwellers could fit this category by 2021. The results of this survey showed that

51 Booz-Allen-Hamilton Strategic Rail Review p.45

52 Sligo Chamber of Commerce Submission p.2 See Appendix

24% of the total rural population perceived themselves as having unmet transport needs, while in some key groups the proportion of people with unmet needs was considerably higher. At the time of the survey, these results were applied to 1996 population data to derive absolute numbers of those with needs. The lack of rural transport can contribute to social exclusion. While private transport is the predominant mode of transport in rural areas, there are still some 20% of people without access to a car in the counties of Sligo, Mayo and Leitrim⁵³.

The Rapporteur recommends that a new Rural Transport Survey should be undertaken to update information on the level of unmet rural transport needs in Ireland.

Traditional bus services link rural areas to important urban centres while also passing through other rural areas on their routes. Other services include smaller vehicles collecting rural residents, which take passengers to local service centres and return them home afterwards. The quality of conventional services has been described as 'patchy'⁵⁴. In certain places, community buses only operate on a weekly basis while many rural transport programmes only operate in their catchment areas and do not cover county boundaries. Given the size of counties, there can be more than one Rural Transport Programme (RTP) operating in a county. While rural transport services are flexible and have a regular scheduled timetable, there are few programmes which operate on a demand responsive basis. In the Progressing Rural Transport in Ireland Report it was estimated that only 16.9% of services were demand responsive.

While progress has been made in rural areas with initiatives such as the Evening Transport Service, a rapid response dial-up taxi service- similar to a scheme which is in place in the Netherlands- could bring the Rural Transport Programme to another level.

The main characteristics of the scheme are demand responsiveness, door-to-door service, booking by telephone one hour in advance and taxis are shared. Subsidies are fixed in proportion to farebox revenues. The success of the scheme is based on its flexibility, low cost and its reach to more isolated areas.

The Rapporteur recommends that a large-scale demand-responsive dial-up transit system similar to the programme adopted in the Netherlands should be reviewed as a matter of priority with the objective of it becoming a central element to a New Rural Transport Scheme.

The Rural Transport Scheme should cover county boundaries. While there may be more than one programme operating in certain counties, the county councils through their sustainable transport departments could take responsibility to ensure that these programmes are coordinated and that the different transport schemes combined cover the entire county.

The Rapporteur recommends that Rural Transport Programmes should operate according to county boundaries as a matter of priority and not within natural catchment areas.

Another issue with the Rural Transport Programme is its limited focus on socially excluded groups. In the Progressing Rural Transport in Ireland Report the potential to expand to other socially excluded groups was highlighted with a long term strategy of reaching out to the wider public, such as commuters. An expansive Rural Transport Programme could focus on other categories of persons, such as those travelling on a regular basis to their place of work. There are not only environmental and traffic benefits, but a more public rural transport system also avoids any stigmatisation while continuing to deliver a service to those most in need.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **a new remarketed Rural Transport Programme should be launched with services to the larger public such as commuters.**
- ✦ **the new sustainable transport departments operating under the county councils should be given responsibility for the rolling out of a new Rural Transport Programme and given responsibility for ensuring entire counties are covered.**
- ✦ **the Inter-departmental Working Group on Rural Public Transport should be re-established with a timeframe and mandate to review a possible relaunching of the rural transport programme.**

53 CSO Figures 2003

54 A Discussion Paper July 2006 Executive Summary

4.8 Air Access

In the annual European Cities Monitor's survey of business decision-makers, international links and connections to other major economic centres were identified as the third most important criterion for determining the location of investment⁵⁵. Air access is also vital for the tourism sector with 80% of all overseas tourists visiting the West arriving by air, either directly into the region or via another airport, travelling internally to the West.

The two international airports servicing the West are Ireland West Airport Knock and Shannon Airport. Both airports face challenges in terms of maintaining existing connections and hubs and continuing to attract more inbound services. In the light of fluctuating oil prices and the "Open Skies" Agreement, the issues of maintaining connections remain particularly challenging.

Regional airports play a key role in connecting businesses to international customers via connections to the international airports of Dublin, Cork, Shannon and Knock. A key challenge for regional airports is to continue their connections to international airports. It is important that flights arriving and departing from all airports should be coordinated in order to facilitate the movement of business representatives. Regional airports should also be encouraged to develop connections internationally with neighbouring countries to promote tourism. The planned spending of €86 million announced in February 2007 on the development of regional airports should go ahead.

The Rapporteur recommends that:

- ✦ **tourism agencies, airport authorities and the business sector should play a key role in the development of transport systems to connect international and regional airports.**
- ✦ **state and regional authorities should encourage airlines to coordinate their arrivals and departures to ensure that people can enter and leave the Western seaboard airports without delay.**
- ✦ **planned spending of €86 million, announced in February 2007, on the development of regional airports should go ahead.**

55 EU Commission '4th Report on Economic and Social Cohesion' p.59

Chapter 5: Communications and Energy Infrastructure

Key Messages

- ✦ In 2006 only 12.7% of households in the Western region had broadband access.
- ✦ Despite improvements in the past two years, penetration remains below the EU average of 20%.
- ✦ The lack of broadband in rural areas has forced companies to relocate to more urban areas.
- ✦ The Metropolitan Area Network Scheme has had little to no take-up outside of major urban centres.
- ✦ There are a number of broadband blackspots identified by county councils, which are not included in the National Broadband Strategy.
- ✦ The fastest speed that is widely available in Ireland (6 Mbit/s) costs four to five times more than considerably higher speeds in countries such as France, Germany and Hungary.
- ✦ The Western region's electricity transmission capacity is substantially lower than the eastern coast.
- ✦ The north-west counties of Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal and south-west counties of Kerry and West Cork have no connection to the Gas Network.
- ✦ Ireland's energy import dependency reached 91% in 2006 while its CO₂ emissions are expected to exceed the Kyoto emissions targets by 1.4 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent each year between now and 2012 even despite recent Government initiatives⁵⁶.
- ✦ Ireland has the second best wind resource in Europe, which is primarily concentrated in the Western seaboard but many of the best western counties for renewable energy have the weakest transmission.
- ✦ In order to promote renewable energy without impacting upon the scenic beauty of areas, there is a need for the Western seaboard region to identify renewable energy zones and draw up guidelines for the development of renewable energy in such areas

5.1 Broadband Infrastructure

Broadband infrastructure has been described as "*critical for economic performance and national welfare*"⁵⁷. The roll out of broadband infrastructure today is as fundamental as the delivery of electricity infrastructure in the 1950s. In the National Spatial Strategy, broadband was identified as one of three core physical infrastructure networks.

Similarly to other key physical infrastructure networks, the Western seaboard region suffers from an inadequate broadband service. In 2006, only 12.7% of households in the Western region had broadband access. As a result of private market delivery of broadband, serious regional disparities have developed in broadband infrastructure. According to the 2007 Forfás Report on Broadband Rollout, take-up in Dublin is significantly higher (32.2 %) than take-up in the Border counties, which is almost half the national average at 12%⁵⁸.

Market-led roll out of broadband has for the most part failed to penetrate many areas in the West of Ireland. While broadband penetration in Ireland is growing (17%) it remains below the EU average of 20%⁵⁹. Factors contributing to the lack of broadband investment in the West of Ireland are the low density of population and perceived lack spending power of consumers in the region. In response to the 'market failure', the Government has taken initiatives to roll out broadband through projects such as a multi-million Euro investment in fibre-optic networks Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) and Group Broadband Schemes. According to a critical value-for money report recently published by the Department of Communications, almost half the Government's €80m budget to deploy the first phase of fibre-optic metropolitan area networks (MANs) was spent building five MANs networks that have never been used⁶⁰. Of the five towns that had no customer take-up, two of them were located in the western coastal region, Kiltimagh and Gweedore. The Report suggested that the reasons for lack of take-up in a number of Phase 1

57 Preston et al./ Telecommunications Policy 31 (2007) 389-40

58 Forfás Report December 2007 p.25

59 13th Single Telecoms Market Progress Report Viviane Reding EU Telecoms Commissioner 19 March 2008

60 The Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR) of Phase I of the MANs Programme

towns are the lack of critical mass and large companies which demand high speed broadband connection. The Report did, however, claim that IDA are 'unequivocal' that MANs provided greater choice, better service and lower prices to their clients in terms of broadband connectivity. It was concluded that: *"the fact that Phase 1 MANs have experienced significant difficulty in attracting customers in smaller settlements draws into question the wisdom of attempting to use them as regional development tools in these circumstances in the first place. The underlying structural or geographic problems which prevent or dissuade the private sector from providing a service can also apply to a MAN"*⁶¹.

Towns in seven of the nine western coastal region counties were scheduled to be connected to MANs under phase two of the project. While all towns listed in Phase 2 are to be completed based on the Department of Communications report, it would appear unlikely that MANs will be rolled out to smaller towns, unless there are large companies operating in them. The Report concluded that the forthcoming National Broadband Strategy (NBS) *'is a much more cost effective and appropriate means of extending broadband availability in cases where the market has not already done so (such as in less populated rural areas).'*

The National Broadband Strategy (NBS) is the latest attempt to attain 100% broadband connectivity. A single national tender will be used for the National Broadband Scheme and the final product that consumers will receive from the NBS will be an 'always on' service of at least 1Mbit/s down and 128kbits/s up. Concerns have been raised about the National Strategy's criteria for listing areas as connected: the National Strategy relies heavily on mobile broadband, which can be disrupted unless the mobile coverage is of a very high quality. Leitrim County Council have carried out their own survey which has demonstrated that there is no broadband availability in certain areas outside towns despite being categorised as broadband connected areas under the NBS. The Survey found that 71% of the people surveyed had no access to broadband⁶². Based on the evidence of broadband blackspots identified by county councils, it is essential that the Department of Communications carries out independent inspections of areas which are claimed by broadband providers to be connected to broadband but which have been identified as blackspots by local authorities. The NBS Map should then be amended as a matter of priority to include areas which are shown to be without broadband.

61 p63 Value for Money and Policy Review of the Metropolitan Area Networks

62 Leitrim County Council Broadband Survey, 2007

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ♦ **in conjunction with local councils, that the Department of Communications should carry out inspections of areas which broadband providers claim to be connected, but have been identified as blackspots by local councils. The National Broadband Scheme (NBS) Map should be amended accordingly as a matter of priority, to ensure that these areas are now declared to be without broadband and therefore form part of the National Scheme.**
- ♦ **making mandatory the installation of telecommunications ducting on an open access basis on all national road upgrades. Ducting should also be mandatory in planning guidelines for all new residential, commercial and public building developments**⁶³.

5.2 Cost and Quality

With the current focus on roll out and penetration, the state has neglected other key aspects to broadband such as quality of service and development of applications. Commenting on the Irish Government initiatives, Preston and Crawley have stated: *'these national broadband strategies are marked by a heavy emphasis on supply side access-led policies without due attention to the demand-side factors. In particular, there has been a lack of coordination between policies on infrastructure roll out and policies on the development of applications, content and services'*⁶⁴.

As a result of the sole focus on rolling out of broadband, Ireland lags behind other European countries both in terms of speed and cost of broadband. In a recent European Commission Staff Working Paper on Broadband it was estimated that only 19% of products in Ireland have speeds above 2mbit/s in comparison to 47% in Britain and 55% in France. The fastest speed that is widely available in Ireland (6 Mbit/s) costs four to five times more than considerably higher speeds in countries such as France, Germany and Hungary: *"an Irish business would pay over €2,000 per annum for a 6 Mbit/s ADSL service, while its counterpart in Germany would pay up to €534 for 16 Mbit/s (depending on usage). In France, the annual cost is €530 for 18 Mbit/s, and in Sweden, 24 Mbit/s costs just under €1,200 per annum"*⁶⁵.

63 Forfas 'Ireland's Broadband Performance and Policy Requirements' p.3 December 2007

64 Preston, Paschal, Anthony Cawley and Monika Metykova (2007) 'Broadband and Rural Areas in the EU: Recent Research and Implications'. Telecommunications Policy, Vol.31 p.395

65 Forfás 'Ireland's Broadband Performance and Policy

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ♦ the creation of regional broadband awareness schemes to ensure that the public are aware of their broadband availability and the potential of businesses to grow using broadband technology.
- ♦ that minimum bandwidth of 7Mb/s by 2011 be agreed for all towns with populations of over 5,000.

Unless there are state initiatives there is a danger that next generation broadband could be confined to the Greater Dublin Area. It is therefore necessary to ensure that Western seaboard counties are included in the roll out of next generation broadband. This could be achieved by piloting schemes in Western seaboard towns.

The Rapporteur recommends that state financial support should be provided to pilot next generation broadband schemes in at least three towns in each of the 10 Western seaboard counties in which broadband infrastructure enables it.

5.3 Energy Infrastructure Overview

The need for high quality energy infrastructure was emphasised by the NSS: *“Reliable and effective energy systems, such as gas and electricity to power industry and services, are key prerequisites for effective regional development”*⁶⁶. Industries, which are seen as potential areas for growth in the West such as internationally traded services⁶⁷ rely on high quality electricity infrastructure. Reliable and low cost electricity is also fundamental for the provision of public services such as health.

The West of Ireland is predominantly reliant on electricity as its prime source of energy. While electricity demand is increasing year on year across the country, infrastructure has not matched this growth in demand. In a 2006 Forfás study it was reported that demand for electricity in Ireland is outstripping the rest of the EU: Ireland’s annual growth is 3.1% compared to the EU average of 1.1%. The report also found that Ireland has a low level of spare electricity capacity and while it is expected that there will be sufficient generation capacity to meet demand until 2010, much will depend on the performance of existing generation plants.

Requirements’ p.3 December 2007

66 National Spatial Strategy, 2002, p64

67 Western Development Commission submission to EirGrid p.2

Western counties have also experienced rapid increases in demand. In county Donegal there has been an average growth of 7.4% over the past ten years which has put a significant strain over power stations. Though demand for electricity for manufacturing has lessened, growth in the services sector and an increasing population has led to an ever increasing demand for energy.

5.4 Electricity Transmission Capacity

Figure 3 below highlights the relatively low level electricity capacity of the Western regions as a whole. The north-west in particular is limited to transmission capacity of 110kv. Apart from the 220 kV line at Flagford-Srananagh there are no plans for the development of transmission lines for the north-west above 110 kV line capacity in the Transmission Development Plan 2007-2011.

As a result of low level capacity and the increasing wind generation a number of pre-existing 110kV lines have been identified as at risk of overloading⁶⁸. This in turn has the consequence of leading to brown outs or black outs which can severely affect businesses operating in the region.



Figure 5: Electricity transmission for the Island of Ireland in 2006

68 Transmission development plan 5.01

There is a real need for reliable and competitive electricity for businesses and industry operating in West of Ireland. Companies located in the West have expressed frustration at the lack of electricity infrastructure⁶⁹. The potential for brown-outs has forced some companies to invest in their own generators. As this infrastructure deficit continues, the Region's ability to attract new industry will continue to be stifled. Furthermore, renewable energy companies have expressed the intention to make further investments in the Western seaboard region if the transmission capacity is upgraded sufficiently to meet the demand. With increasing costs and no alternative sources of energy, the Western region is facing serious energy problems.

As an alternative to electricity, natural gas is seen as an essential form of energy and key to attracting industry and commerce. Business appreciates the advantages of natural gas as a low cost form of energy, which adds to the attractiveness of regions for new industries when making decisions on locating. It therefore not only enables local businesses to remain competitive through the lower costs but attracts inward investment into the Region. Bord Gáis Éireann itself highlighted the importance of gas to energy infrastructure: *"industrial and commercial users favour Natural Gas because it is clean, economical and efficient. Consequently, new industries tend to locate in Natural Gas areas"*⁷⁰.

69 see Western Development Commission Towards a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland Green Paper on Energy p.49



While Bord Gáis Éireann have argued that legislation mandates them to invest only in commercially viable projects, the Bord Gáis did allow for connection of uneconomic towns where the connection cost was funded from another source. In the WDC submission on energy it was stated that: *“Both the CER and BGÉ, who were instrumental in developing the policy, believe that if the amount of the negative NPV (as estimated when a town was appraised for a connection) is funded in the form of a supplemental*

contribution then the town can become eligible for a connection."
The absence of gas infrastructure in the north-west and south-west should be treated as a 'market failure' and Government should respond accordingly through public investment.

The Rapporteur recommends a new regional funding scheme for the Western Coastal Region to ensure that gas infrastructure is delivered. This scheme could ensure that funding for 'uneconomic towns' is granted to make up for the shortfall of revenue as against the cost of delivering the infrastructure.

5.6 Renewable Energy

Ireland's energy import dependency reached 91% in 2006 while its CO₂ emissions are expected to exceed the Kyoto emissions targets by 1.4 million tonnes of CO₂ each year between now and 2012 despite recent Government initiatives⁷². If Ireland is to become less dependent on a volatile international energy market and to succeed in reducing carbon emissions more rapidly, there must be increased investment in renewable energy. The Government's Renewable Energy policy, reflecting the RES-E Directive of the European Parliament and Council (Directive 2001/77/EC), sets a target for Ireland of 15% of total electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2010, and 33% by 2020. Wind power generation is expected to be the major contributor to the 2010 target.

Ireland has the second best wind resource in Europe, which is primarily concentrated in western counties⁷³. Wind and hydro energy in 2006, respectively, accounted for 5.6% (4.0% in 2005) and 2.5% (2.3% in 2005) of Ireland's gross electrical consumption. There are currently 35 on-shore and one offshore wind energy projects in operation in the country, the majority of which are based in Western seaboard counties. While wind power has seen growth of 46% in 2006 and shows considerable potential to develop in western counties, many of the places with the best potential for wind energy such as Donegal have the weakest transmission infrastructure⁷⁴. As was highlighted above, 110kv lines have been identified as at a risk of overloading as a result of increased generation from wind farms.

Community participation is seen as crucial for the development of wind energy in the West. However, due to the complex nature of connecting to the national grid and of the planning process, small scale renewable energy projects are prevented from taking off. The Western Development Commission has sought to address this issue through projects such as To Catch the Wind Programme, but more investment in encouraging wind energy programmes is necessary.

Ireland has been identified as one of the best locations for wave energy in the world⁷⁵. Although the development of such energy is in its infancy, increasing research and development is being invested in the sector. As the Western seaboard region has significant potential in both wind and ocean renewable energies, there is a need for strategic planning to address the complex infrastructural and environmental issues. It is therefore preferable that a strategic plan for the Western seaboard region be developed, which would divide the region into renewable energy zones and make recommendations as to how renewable energy can be developed without adversely affecting the scenic beauty of Western seaboard counties.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **that programmes should be put in place through local authorities to train, network and advise individuals and groups in starting up sustainable energy companies.**
- ✦ **that the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources should identify renewable energy zones on the Western seaboard region and develop guidelines to encourage the development at community and regional levels of renewable energies such as ocean and wind energy. The guidelines should also ensure that no projects would adversely affect the environment and scenic beauty of western counties.**

72 Environmental Protection Agency 'Ireland's Environment 2008'

73 Western Development Commission (2004) 'To Catch Wind: The Potential for Community'

74 Western Development Commission Green Paper on Energy Submission

75 Intertrade Ireland Report *Environmental Goods and Services Sector on the Island of Ireland* p11

Chapter 6 Health Care

Key messages

- ✦ National health policy has become increasingly disconnected from community health needs.
- ✦ Smaller hospitals are increasingly seen, not as providing life-and-death services, such as A&E and maternity care, to their communities, but as 'wasting' resources that could otherwise be used to build up new specialties and subspecialties now seen as vital to medical careers.
- ✦ No country with a modern system of health care has set out to destroy its tier of general hospitals, as Ireland—with one of the lowest levels of hospitals per head of population in the European Union—now plans to do.
- ✦ Implementing the Hanly and Teamwork Reports will close around thirteen acute public hospitals in the West, resulting in the loss of up to 2 000 inpatient beds, eight A&E units and two maternity facilities. Up to 12 inpatient psychiatric services in the region additionally face closure.
- ✦ Each remaining hospital A&E will serve an area of 2 300 square miles, leaving hundreds of thousands of people two hours' drive or more from inpatient care.
- ✦ 'Pre-hospital emergency care', provided by 'advanced' paramedics is to compensate for these closures. But national research shows that only 17% of those who attend an A&E unit arrive by ambulance or other emergency transport service.
- ✦ Denying communities 'golden hour' access will inevitably result in needless deaths and disability. Childbirth will become less safe.
- ✦ The acute public hospitals in the West that are threatened with closure should be retained: these hospitals should offer 24/7 inpatient A&E, including acute surgery, and maternity care.
- ✦ No good scientific evidence has been produced to substantiate the claim that larger volumes of surgery lead to better outcomes for patients, except in the case of a very small number of highly complex procedures.
- ✦ The vast bulk of surgery and medicine in smaller public hospitals does not require high volumes for good outcomes. Smaller hospitals' results in routine areas, such as coronary care, are as good, and, in some cases, better, than those of larger institutions.
- ✦ The viability of smaller hospitals can be ensured through reorganising services, such as surgery, utilising telemedicine and offering specialist training to doctors with a special interest in working in such settings.
- ✦ Midwife-led units and home birth services, which are central to systems of care in countries such as Germany and The Netherlands, should also be developed.
- ✦ Other aspects of national health policy also threaten the viability of acute public hospitals in the West. Profitable health services are being removed from public hospital control and outsourced to potentially unaccountable 'networks'. Services for chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes, are being turned into a market. Public hospitals will soon be forced to compete for contracts with private for profit centres.
- ✦ Privatising hospital care in this way may result in reduced access to services, both on income and geographic grounds. Cancer care, for example, is being developed in a way that will intensify existing regional imbalances: the cancer strategy virtually ignored the North-West. The new radiology oncology networks have left cancer patients in the northern half of the country without accessible services. The robotic centralisation of cancer care is not in patients' interests.
- ✦ Terminating cancer surgery in public hospitals will jeopardise their ability to provide high quality services in other departments.
- ✦ Public hospitals such as those in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee face destabilisation and downgrading, if the national cancer strategy is implemented as planned.

6.1 Unequal health outcomes

The main determinants of disease are economic. The death rate for strokes, for example, is three times higher for the lowest occupational group than it is for the highest. Infant deaths around the time of birth are three times more likely in poorer families than in richer households.

Socioeconomic inequity frequently overlaps with geographic inequality, compounding the burden of disadvantage. Lesser access to health services often combines with poverty, unemployment, lack of education and environmental factors, such as housing and water quality, to adversely affect health. These multiple disadvantages translate into poorer health outcomes for individuals, their families and their communities.

The overall paucity of data in the public domain in Ireland, however, prevents the regional analysis of health outcomes. Data on mortality and morbidity are analysed more often by class than by area. 'Black spots' identified (but not published) at sub-county level show evidence of lower health status. Babies born to mothers in socially deprived areas, for example, tend to be of low birth weight – an established indicator of poverty – while, at the other end of the life cycle, these black spots show increased overall mortality (Department of Health and Children 2001:32).

What has been termed 'death by geography' may be as salient as death from poverty. Trauma deaths, for example, are markedly higher in country areas than in cities, particularly in the absence of an accessible hospital casualty unit. 'Dead on arrival' [in hospital] rates vary from 23% for urban residents to 74% for small town dwellers (Royal College of Surgeons 1988). A national study of respiratory deaths in Scotland showed that asthma kills more people in remote areas (Wilson 1984). Country people are more likely to suffer from diabetes-induced blindness (Leese et al 1993) than their urban counterparts.

Babies born to mothers living in the north-west are much more likely to die around the time of birth (ESRI 2006:41). Irish research shows that deaths during the first seven days of life are significantly higher in that region. Looking at the Western seaboard from 1995-99, overall mortality was highest in counties Leitrim and Mayo, while more people, proportionately, died of circulatory diseases in Leitrim, Cork and Kerry than in other Western counties (Department of Health and Children 2001:32-3).

6.2 Inequitable health provision

Differentials in health outcomes are linked to disparities in service provision. Health care resources in Ireland are unequally distributed across the regions. Access depends on place of residence as well as personal wealth.

The Rapporteur recommends the replacement of the current inequitable healthcare system with a universal public health system offering equality of geographic access, free at point of delivery.

Ireland's quota of hospital specialists falls well below what is required of a modern health service. Consultants, like general practitioners, constitute a scarce resource. Despite increasing numbers of doctors in recent years, Ireland continues to have a lower number of physicians per capita than many OECD countries. In 2006, Ireland had 2.9 physicians per 1 000 population, compared with an OECD average of 3.1 (OECD 2008). Moreover, these scarce resources are unevenly distributed across the regions.

Health services, particularly those that are hospital-based, are more readily available in the eastern half of the country than in the West. In 2004, for example, the Eastern Region had 47% of Ireland's medical consultants, while having just 36% of its population (National Hospitals Office/Comhairle 2005: iii). National and supra-regional specialist units and services are generally located in Dublin, and to a lesser extent, in Cork.

The likelihood of cancer patients receiving a particular treatment varies significantly across the country. Radiotherapy for breast cancer and surgery for prostate cancer are both less available in the West than in the eastern half of the country (Walsh and Comber 2006). Colorectal and, to a lesser extent, lung cancer patients in the West are similarly disadvantaged.

Disparities also exist in relation to service provision at primary or community care level. Ireland has a growing shortage of general practitioners and other primary care professionals. Economically vulnerable areas are known to have lower doctor per head of population ratios. Such communities generally have fewer general practitioners (Crowley 2005: 26). In some parts of the country, in Sixmilebridge, Co Clare, for example, new patients face a four-month wait to be accepted as patients in some medical practices.

Not enough is known in Ireland about such geographic imbalances. Problems of rural isolation, social deprivation and the effect of remoteness from health services are under-researched (Crowley 2005: 26). Rural general practitioners face particular difficulties, not least the issue of onerous night and weekend rotas (O'Dowd et al 1997). But while the development of large general practitioner cooperatives

across the country has improved doctors' working conditions, out-of-hours access to general practitioner services in many non-urban areas remains problematic. These difficulties may intensify if a recent report questioning the sustainability of general practice in rural areas in Ireland is accurate (Glynn 2004). Australia has developed a system of graded incentives proportional to remoteness to promote general practice in isolated areas (Crowley 2005: 26). The Rapporteur recommends that Ireland follow its example.

Moreover, rural communities are disadvantaged in accessing the links in the 'chain of survival'. The disadvantaged regions include the North-West, Western and South-Western seaboard, the peninsulas and their inhabited islands (Department of Health and Children 2006:95). Within these regions, those areas most at risk have been identified by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (Moore 2005). The Rapporteur recommends that well resourced emergency responses, such as first responder programmes, be developed in disadvantaged regions in the West.

6.3 Disparities in health funding

Disparities in service provision are a consequence of inequities in funding. Health funding in Ireland is inequitably distributed across the regions. Other countries have implemented fairer funding systems, but Ireland has yet to address these imbalances. Here, health funding continues to be largely a legacy of history.

Health funding in Ireland continues to be based on a 50-year-old formula – not designed to deliver greater regional equality – that originated in Britain. From 1948-62, NHS health funding was calculated on the basis of 'what you got last year, plus an allowance for growth, plus an allowance for scandals' (Maynard and Ludbrook 1988). This is a formula that perpetuated – and, in Ireland, continues to perpetuate – regional inequalities.

Britain addressed this problem in the mid-1970s. The Resource Allocation Working Party assessed health needs and health funding according to population measures and death ratios (Houghton nd). The result was a rational funding formula that lessened geographic differences and achieved greater equality between the regions based on need.

The development of a more geographically equitable health funding model in Ireland would probably involve a

redistribution of resources from the eastern half of the country to the West. Dublin's over-abundance of specialist hospitals set against the background of a relatively young age profile (Houghton nd) is difficult to justify. Any such re-allocation of resources would impact significantly on the city's four major private non-profit or 'voluntary' hospitals, St Vincent's, the Mater, Beaumont and St James's. These hospitals can be seen to wield a disproportionate influence on national health policy, bending it towards ever-increasing centralisation and increasing the burden of health disadvantage in the western half of the country. The national cancer strategy offers a recent example of this bias.

If Western seaboard communities are to survive, a new model of health funding designed to remedy geographical imbalances is imperative.

The Rapporteur recommends the development of a funding formula designed to deliver greater equality in health service provision between the regions.

6.4 Mapping disease

Any funding formula based on population measures and death ratios (Houghton nd) must be evidence-based. But much of disease and sickness in Ireland remains, literally, off the map. Geographic and social inequalities in health outcomes, service provision and healthcare access remain hidden, forming an invisible backdrop to state policy.

Over the past fifty years in Ireland, the production of maps showing disease and mortality has dwindled significantly. Official health statistics show a declining level of detail. Regional disparities in health outcomes, for example, are rarely published at sub-regional levels: death rates from diseases at county level are publicly unavailable. Accurately mapping the Western seaboard in terms of health outcomes has become very difficult in consequence.

Vital statistics publications mapped mortality from 1950-1991, when mapping ceased (Houghton nd). The Central Statistics Office no longer publishes annual death rates from major diseases by province, county and county borough. Department of Health publications seldom map disease, nor do agencies such as the Health Research Board or Trinity College's Small Area Health Research Unit. While the National Cancer Registry (Ireland) maps cancer at former health board

levels, figures are not released at county level or lower. Even a 10-year study of mortality data (Balandia and Wilde 2001), published by the Institute of Public Health, omitted death rates by county.

Only the Public Health Information System routinely produces county figures. Their five-year averages, for example, shows that Offaly has the highest death rate from suicide and self-harm. This information would be useful to those campaigning for better services for mental health, but it is not in the public domain.

Despite the dearth of published data, health statistics are routinely collected at county and county borough level. According to geographer Frank Houghton, formerly of the National Institute of Regional and Spatial Analysis, Maynooth University, this reluctance to use disease/mortality maps allows 'a major and contentious political issue with significant budget implications' to remain hidden from public view. Public Health Information System data should routinely be made available to the public.

The Rapporteur recommends the routine publication and mapping of health statistics, including death rates from diseases, at county and county borough level by the CSO and other agencies, such as the Department of Health and Children, the Small Area Health Research Unit, the National Cancer Registry (Ireland) and the Institute of Public Health.

Mapping is the most effective way of showing geographic differences at a glance. Such mapping is overdue and would involve no or negligible additional resources.

6.5 Centralisation

The FitzGerald Report represented the first attempt on the part of the medical profession to centralise acute or urgent care hospital services. It was driven by surgeons and reflected the increasing specialisation taking place in surgery in these islands. The 1968 report recommended funneling all acute services into just 16 hospitals (FitzGerald 1968). Many of the trenchant criticisms made of FitzGerald during its Dail passage could well have been levelled at its successor, the Hanly Report, however. Indeed, FitzGerald proved so explosive, politically, that it was impossible to implement directly.

The Government subsequently gave medical consultants the power to structure the market for their services, tailoring both posts—and, by extension—their accompanying private

practice to suit doctors' professional interests. The 1970 Health Act set up Comhairle na nOspidéal, giving the council the power to regulate the appointment of consultant staff and giving consultant staff a majority on the council. Each post was a once-off, structured to reflect the 'special interests' of the appointee: many jobs straddled the public and the private (non-profit) sector. Since hospital services depended entirely upon the appointment of these specialists, Comhairle, a publicly unaccountable and unrepresentative body, effectively controlled all publicly funded hospital services.

Hospital services in Ireland became increasingly unequal. Over the years, Comhairle laid the foundation for the implementation of FitzGerald. Hospitals in Dublin, Cork and Galway got the lion's share of consultant appointments. Medical specialties became increasingly concentrated in large urban areas.

General and county hospitals across Ireland were starved of resources (O'Connor, 2007:128). Over a quarter of a century, a two-speed hospital service developed, one urban, academic and prestigious, the other non-urban, non-academic and non-prestigious. Comhairle saw itself as serving the needs of medical trainers, shaping consultant posts to suit whatever training programmes the royal colleges saw fit to devise. Medical bodies, university medical faculties and city teaching hospitals had most to gain most from centralisation. Patients, families, and communities, particularly in non-urban areas, had most to lose.

Medical training in Ireland became increasingly specialised, aligning itself with British royal college training programmes. But medical specialisation demands greater volumes: the more specialised the practice, the rarer the condition and the greater the volume of patients required. Unlike Britain, Ireland did not have the population to support high levels of specialisation. As the training of physicians and surgeons became more specialised here, the staffing of smaller and medium-sized hospitals became more difficult. By the end of the 1980s, the lack of fit between medical education and health needs had become apparent. So specialised had medical training become by 1995 that it threatened staffing even in the larger urban teaching hospitals (Comhairle na n-Ospidéal 1989-92). By then, Ireland's royal colleges had developed 157 specialist and subspecialist training programmes. Surgery was by far the biggest propagator of subspecialties.

In the mid-1970s, Comhairle turned its attention to maternity care, intensifying its centralisation programme. The council's

1976 report was the first (in Ireland) to advocate the mass closure of maternity services. But there was no evidence to support its claim that medical consultant 'supervision' would result in safer maternity care. However, centralisation answered a professional need: obstetrics was the specialisation of abnormal birth. (It complemented midwifery, the specialisation of normal birth.) But since only around 10 per cent of women had complicated labours, obstetricians needed very large volumes of mothers to maintain their surgical skills. Significantly increasing market share for its members, Comhairle decided that all mothers should give birth under specialist management. This decision to centralise the services for childbirth had far-reaching consequences.

Having a child was now seen to require expensive specialist attention. Local facilities run by less expensive (but competing) generalists—midwives and general practitioners—closed. In 1973, there were 108 places where a woman could give birth: by 1998, there were just 24 (Comhairle na nOspideal 1976). Childbirth became less safe. Many mothers now had to travel further for their care. Roadside births increased. With all women required to give birth in large centralised units, childbirth became increasingly mechanised. The induction and acceleration of labour became the norm. (Comhairle's 'model' maternity care unit was based on a turnover of three mothers per labour ward bed per 24 hours (Comhairle na nOspideal 1976). Caesarean section rates rose steeply. Today, Ireland has one of the most highly centralised systems of maternity care in Europe; and its high Caesarean rates equal those of the United States. Private fee incomes in obstetrics—averaging an annual €500 000 per head—are now among the highest in the world.

Such is the interdependence of hospital services that terminating one department makes other closures more likely. The loss of a maternity unit could prefigure the closure of an entire hospital. Without the epidurals and general anaesthetics needed for obstetrics and gynaecology, there is less work for anaesthetists; fewer anaesthetists generally mean a reduction in surgery; and cutting general surgery may lead to a scaling down of accident and emergency services. Given the maternity closures that are planned, this is a point worth noting.

Bantry Hospital, for example, lost its maternity service in the mid-1980s: that hospital is now effectively scheduled for closure. Monaghan General Hospital lost its maternity unit in 2001: today, with the termination of its medical emergency service, the hospital faces imminent closure, in effect. (That maternity closure was driven by a subsidiary of the Royal

College of Physicians, the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (O'Connor 2007: 147-54)).

6.6 The Hanly/Teamwork template

Ireland is extremely short of health resources. Its total health spend accounted for 7.5% of GDP in 2006, almost 1.5 percentage points lower than the OECD average of 8.9% (OECD 2008). Despite increasing its quota of doctors in recent years, Ireland continues to have a lower number of physicians per head than many OECD countries. In 2006, Ireland had 2.9 physicians per 1 000 population, compared with an OECD average of 3.1. Competition for resources is therefore acute.

Over the last decade, smaller hospitals have been increasingly seen, not as providing life-and-death services, such as A&E and maternity care, to their communities, but as 'wasting' resources that could otherwise be used to build up new specialties and subspecialties now seen as vital to medical careers (Kinsella 2003: 121).

The now dominant medical view—first enshrined in FitzGerald and more recently in the Hanly Report—is that building specialties and subspecialties should take precedence over serving the basic health needs of local communities. Had members of those communities been consulted, however, they would likely take the view that proximity to hospital for common conditions, such as asthma or strokes, or for everyday occurrences, such as farm accidents or road traffic injuries, should take precedence over developing esoteric medical subspecialties that, by definition, serve only a tiny proportion of the population.

Medical trainers mooted service closures prior to the publication of the Hanly Report. The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) heralded the mass closure of accident and emergency (A&E) units in 2002. By then, the College (which trains mainly overseas students) had developed a new specialty, emergency medicine. As part of this development, the RCSI announced that it would no longer recognise casualty units not run by emergency consultants as training sites for its students. (Public hospitals have always depended on medical trainees to provide frontline services. A refusal to accredit a hospital for training can result in the closure of a department.) National health policy has become increasingly disconnected from community health needs. If FitzGerald was controversial, Hanly was even more contentious, proposing, as it did, a

three-fold increase in centralisation. In 1968, the FitzGerald Report said a hospital should cater for a population of 120 000. In 2003, the Hanly Report proposed that an acute (public) hospital should cater for a minimum of 350-500 000. FitzGerald recommended centralising all services into 16 acute or urgent care hospitals; Hanly advocated funneling all acute inpatient services into just 10-12 centres. Hanly further proposed closing all single specialty hospitals, including stand-alone orthopaedic and maternity facilities.

Fully implementing Hanly will effectively close around 40 of Ireland's 53 acute public hospitals. This will exacerbate an already serious deficit of acute hospital beds. Ireland's stock of such beds has fallen significantly in recent decades. From 1981 to 2000, the number of acute hospital beds per head of population fell 'to an all time low' (Department of Health and Children: 2002:20). This 20-year decline – from 5.1 to 3.1. per 1 000 of population – leaves Ireland well down the acute hospital bed league. This decrease in bed per head ratios was attributed solely to 'population growth': lack of public investment was not mentioned (Department of Health and Children: 2002:20).

Population growth is certainly one factor. From 1980 to 2000 the population grew from 3.4 million to approximately 3.8 million. Other factors increasing the demand for acute hospital beds include the limited availability of primary care or community health services; financial disincentives to attend general practitioners; and an ageing population which is more susceptible to disease.

This is the background against which the Hanly Report is being implemented. Hanly will effectively close hospitals such as Roscommon's and Port Laois's. But mortality data show that these counties have specific health needs. From 1998-2002, for example, Roscommon had the highest death rate from heart disease, while Laois had the highest mortality from road traffic accidents. These death statistics (taken from the Public Health Information System) suggest that Roscommon and Laois have an above average need of accessible hospital A&E units. But Hanly was a template that did not take regional needs into account. Technocratic medicine tends towards standardisation, ignoring local differences, environmental and other factors that a social model of health care would take into account.

Three years after Hanly, the Teamwork Report for the north-east advocated the closure of the region's existing hospitals and their replacement with a single regional entity. This recommendation dovetailed not only with FitzGerald and Hanly but also with the Carey Report. What Teamwork

proposed for the north-east was later declared by the Health Service Executive to be a template for the rest of the country. The Teamwork edict, 'no provision of acute critical care of any nature at the local level', was stark in its implications for all non-urban communities, including those in the West. The core of the plan, namely, that smaller hospitals had to close in order to release public monies for 'centres of excellence', disease entities to be run as 'networks' outside the control of public hospitals, remained obscure, however.

Under Hanly/Teamwork, around thirteen acute public hospitals in the West are scheduled to close, in effect. These hospitals may include (but not be limited to) the following:

County	Hospital	Inpatient beds
Leitrim	Our Lady's, Manorhamilton	60
Roscommon	Roscommon County	131
Galway	Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe	201
	Merlin Park, Galway	327
Clare	Ennis General	94
Limerick	St Munchin's Maternity, Limerick	99
	St Nessel's Orthopaedic, Croom	68
	St John's Limerick	103
Cork	Bantry General	118
	Mallow General	76
	Mercy (MUH), Cork	232
	South Infirmary/Victoria, Cork	275
	St Mary's Orthopaedic, Cork	123
	St Finbarr's, Cork	49

The Hanly/Teamwork template will cut acute public hospital inpatient beds in each region: for the West, this could mean a loss of up to 1 956 acute public hospital inpatient beds (excluding psychiatric beds). Implementing Hanly will close up to eight A&E units, two maternity facilities and up to 12 inpatient psychiatric services in the region.

This grim scenario for the West has been reinforced by another consultancy report commissioned by the Health Service Executive, which also envisages the mass closure of public hospital beds (PA Consulting 2007:150). PA envisages cutting public patient beds, nationally, from 12,778 to 7,990 by 2014. This represents a total bed loss, nationally, of 4,788: 1,698 of these closures are projected for public hospitals in the West of Ireland.

The following are the bed closures projected for public hospitals in the Western seaboard under PA's 'regionalisation scenario':

Public Patient Beds	Actual Projected Losses		
	2007	2014	2014
Mid-Western Region	787	450	337
Southern Region	1 447	868	579
West-North-Western Region	1 917	1 135	782
TOTAL			1,698

No breakdown is available for these regions, but they appear to tally broadly with the projections given for the Hanly/Teamwork implementation. In Cork, PA figures suggest that either the Mercy or the South Infirmary/Victoria will close, but not both. The withdrawal of breast cancer surgery from the Mercy Hospital, however, and the continued refusal to fund its new A&E unit, would suggest that it, and not the South Infirmary/Victoria, may be scheduled for effective closure.

It is assumed that 'pre-hospital emergency care', provided by 'advanced' paramedics will compensate for the more distant siting of hospital A&E and maternity care units. But national research shows that only 17% of those who attend an A&E unit arrive by ambulance or other emergency transport service. Moreover, Ireland's ambulance services are under-resourced by international standards. The country's first emergency medical technician (EMT) training course was held in 2002, while the first advanced emergency medical technician (EMT-A) course finished in 2005. Just 16 qualified. Less than 3 per cent of EMTs have been able to train further in Ireland (O Connor 2007: 137). Nor are there any plans to train a fully fledged paramedic service: HSE plans only to train some 30 per cent of EMTs to this level (Teamwork 2006).

Primary care is also expected to make up the increasing deficit of public hospital services. Much of the care of patients with chronic disease, according to the Department of Health and Children, can and should take place in primary care settings. But the promised roll-out of primary care teams has not taken place. The 2001 Health Strategy promised to have 400-600 primary care teams in place by the end of 2011. By the end of 2007, however, only 97 such teams had been established.

Moreover, there are limits to what can be achieved in primary care settings. In Britain, for example, where similar approaches to cost-cutting have been tried, general practice has been shown to be unable to safely compensate for the closure of acute public hospital beds.

6.7 The impact of acute hospital closures

Implementing the Hanly/Teamwork model will see in-hospital emergency and maternity services concentrated in 'a handful of already overstretched and understaffed hospitals in urban areas'. In non-urban areas, daytime minor injuries units run by nurses are set to replace full service hospital casualty units.

This is an approach to health care planning that is virtually without precedent. No country with a modern system of health care has set out to destroy its tier of general hospitals, as Ireland—with one of the lowest levels of hospitals per head of population in the European Union—now plans to do.

The impact on communities in Western seaboard counties of mass acute hospital closures cannot be overestimated. Dr Jim Bradley described Hanly as 'a direct attack on people's ability to access appropriate care'. The Hanly report proposed a population threshold of 350-500 000 for a 'viable' in-hospital A&E unit. Implementing that requirement in Ireland will require each A&E to serve an area of 2 300 square miles. This will leave hundreds of thousands of people, some of them in Western seaboard areas, two hours' drive or more from hospital inpatient care.

'Not enough cognisance is taken of Ireland's essentially rural nature, both in terms of topography and demography', Dr Tom Nolan MD told a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health. Dr Conor Teljeur, a Trinity College public health specialist, mapped Hanly, demonstrating that its implementation would significantly reduce 'golden hour' access. (The golden hour has become the accepted standard in trauma care around the world: it refers to the outer limit within which appropriate care must be accessed in order to avoid death or permanent disability.) In the North-West, for instance, the Teljeur study showed that fully implementing Hanly would leave 56 per cent of the population without golden hour access in the event of a road traffic accident.

Denying communities golden hour access will inevitably result in needless deaths and disability. Ennis Hospital records,

for example, show that there will be at least 20 avoidable deaths every year if the hospital loses its A&E unit. Delays in reaching hospital are known to cause avoidable deaths and sickness: these have been termed 'distance decay'. During a 30-month period when Monaghan Hospital was off call for all emergencies, distance decay led to 17 needless deaths documented by medical staff.

Medical trainers in Ireland have recognised the importance of ready access to definitive care. A Royal College of Surgeons report has recommended that ambulance personnel in Ireland should transport severely injured patients to an operating theatre, intensive care unit or a rehabilitation unit—within one hour (Luke 2003). Implementing Hanly will make such transportation impossible.

Ireland does not have the demographics to support such a radical restructuring of acute public hospital services, particularly in the West, where the population is highly scattered. The Hanly Report was based on hospital/population ratios (laid down by the British Royal College of Surgeons) that were 'totally unsuited to Irish demographics', according to Dr Catherine McNamara, a Trinity College health economist. Four of the former health board regions did not even qualify for a hospital casualty unit on population grounds, Dr Teljeur pointed out. Ireland's population is only 6 per cent of Britain's and its population is almost five times more dispersed.

General practitioners in different parts of the country have shown significant opposition to Hanly. In counties such as Monaghan and Clare, for example, general practitioners have unanimously opposed the implementation of Hanly on health and safety grounds. Dr Nolan, a general practitioner in Kilrush, Co Clare, observed that the underlying question was 'the moral issue of inequity of patient access to services'.

With the hugely increased volume of traffic on Irish roads, the risks of having to travel 80 or 100 miles on poor quality secondary roads to access urgent in-hospital care are more pronounced today than 40 years ago, when Fitzgerald proposed similar hospital closures.

Advanced life support cannot possibly compensate for the enormous extra distances imposed on patients who need to access a hospital A&E. Ireland's ambulance services are significantly under-developed. No national standards exist for ambulance response times. National research shows a delayed response to critical incidents. Ambulance cover is

poor, geographically. In a sparsely populated area, locating the person may be difficult: expecting an ambulance to reach a person within a narrow time frame may be unrealistic. Gaps in cover will inevitably arise. In North Clare, for example, in the event of a second crew being required, several hours may elapse before that ambulance can be at the scene of a road traffic accident.

Even if the services were optimal, paramedics cannot be relied upon to save lives. Trauma victims attended by paramedics are far more likely to die than those supported by traditional ambulance personnel. Scientific evidence shows that, in severe trauma cases, persons receiving advanced life support (from paramedics) are two and a half times more likely to die than those in receipt of basic life support (from EMTs).

Children and older people, to whom hospital visitors matter most, will be disproportionately affected, as will the less well off. A significant proportion of people in rural areas live in poverty. Many of them are without private transport. Peadar McMahon, Chairman of the Monaghan Community Alliance, told the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health how 'the poor, the isolated, the single mothers, the elderly and children' would suffer 'extra trauma pain and hardship' as a result of the planned hospital closures. Deputies and senators heard how implementing Hanly threatened, not only the health and well-being of individual members of society, but also the sustainability of non-urban communities.

'There are economic issues—inward investment will evaporate from an area which does not have reasonable health services. Manufacturing industries and agricultural activity need A&E within close range. Insurance companies will load premia or refuse to cover workers' liability, and community activities, such as festivals and developments [will wane]. Visitors will not want to stay for any length of time in an area where these health services are missing. It will not be an attractive place for young families to set up house, or for the elderly to spend their declining years.'

6.8 A role for smaller hospitals

Only 5% of patients need specialist care: the other 95% suffer from common conditions, such as heart failure, pneumonia, gall bladder and hernia problems, to name but four. These conditions account for 95% of the workload in smaller hospitals, according to consultant physician/cardiologist, Dr

John Barton. Smaller hospitals' results in routine areas, such as coronary care, are as good, and, in some cases, better, than those of larger institutions. Data from the coronary care unit in Monaghan General Hospital, for example, show that the unit outperformed all others in Ireland. Their cardiac patients fared better than those treated anywhere else, including the large Dublin hospitals.

Smaller public hospitals can safely treat trauma cases, Irish research shows. In one study of 1 000 road traffic accident victims, 80% were safely treated safely in the local hospital, with 12% of these undergoing surgery as inpatients and the remainder referred to a regional centre (Street et al 1999).

Telemedicine has an important role to play in the viability of smaller hospitals in Ireland, as in Canada. New technology allows ECGs and x-rays to be reviewed by specialists remote from the patient. A study of over 1 500 head trauma victims in the south of Ireland concluded that head injury patients could safely be treated in a non-specialist setting, linked through telemedicine to a neurosurgical unit (Carroll and O'Connor 1996). In Grampian, Scotland, video-linking between the main hospital in Aberdeen and smaller A&E units has cut referrals to the regional centre by almost 80% (Department of Health 2003).

Certain surgical procedures need to be available on an emergency basis to prevent avoidable deaths. The Royal College of Surgeons has admitted that 'life-saving surgery may occasionally be necessary before a patient can be transferred to a regional trauma unit'.

There is no reason why hospitals cannot specialise in particular elective or planned operations, like private hospitals. Dr Liam McMullin, a surgeon at Roscommon Hospital observed that his hospital had spare capacity during an 18-month period when the National Treatment Purchase Fund was sending patients to the Galway Clinic (a private for profit facility). Writing in The Irish Times, Dr McMullin observed that, by giving the business to the public hospital, 'the Minister could dramatically reduce costs and increase our surgical throughput'. If adopted nationally, such an approach would help reduce waiting lists in bigger public hospitals, increase the cost-effectiveness of smaller public hospitals and enable them to provide sustainable 24/7 inpatient emergency services.

The loss of general physicians and general surgeons is one that can be remedied. A new subspecialty, a special interest in smaller hospitals, could be developed. Such training initiatives are already underway in Scotland. Medical graduates there

have expressed a strong interest in working in such hospitals.

The vast bulk of surgery and medicine in smaller public hospitals does not require high volumes for good outcomes. Moreover, from an economic perspective, it makes little sense to care for patients in third level or specialist hospitals, where inpatient care costs are significantly higher.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **the retention and development of the thirteen acute public hospitals in the West of Ireland threatened with closure under the Hanly and Teamwork Reports.**
- ✦ **the retention of the 1,700 public beds in the region's acute hospitals threatened with closure under the PA Report.**
- ✦ **the retention of Ireland's network of second-level hospitals: these hospitals should offer 24/7 inpatient A&E, including acute surgery, and maternity care.**
- ✦ **the reorganisation of hospital services to sustain surgery in smaller public hospitals.**
- ✦ **that medical trainers be required to develop a new subspecialty, a special interest in smaller hospitals.**

6.9 Maternity care

Ireland's highly centralised model of maternity care leaves many women in non-urban areas at risk of giving birth en route to hospital: the rate of unplanned out-of-hospital births here is significantly higher than in England and Wales, for example. There have been two further maternity closures since 2001. The growing centralisation of these basic facilities means that women have to travel further and further to access in-hospital care: mothers living in West Cork, West Kerry, Inishowen and North Clare, to take four areas, routinely face a 2-hour drive or more during labour to access a maternity unit. Island mothers are expected to accommodate themselves on the mainland for two weeks or more before their babies are due. Babies born unplanned outside hospital are eight times more likely to die than those born as intended in hospital. For women living on the western seaboard, the only alternative to a roadside birth may well be an induction or Caesarean section that is medically unnecessary. Fully implementing the Hanly/Teamwork template will close up to a dozen maternity hospitals and units in this country. Childbirth, in consequence, will become less safe. Dr John Gallagher, then Chairman of the

Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist, warned that these closures would put the lives of thousands of women at risk.

Increasing numbers of women will have their labours accelerated, as midwives are forced to rush mothers through overcrowded labour wards. As more and more women are shepherded into larger units, childbirth will become increasingly mechanised. National health statistics show that this process is already well under way. Nearly half of all babies in Ireland today are born in units with volumes of 4 000+ per annum. Very high surgical and operative delivery rates have become the norm. Almost half of all women having a first child give birth by Caesarean section, forceps or vacuum extraction. Scientific evidence shows that these medical interventions add significantly to the risks for mothers and babies.

Locally accessible maternity care is the norm in many European Union member states. These services are frequently provided by midwives. Midwives are recognised, internationally, as the specialists in normal birth. They are the most appropriate carers of women in childbirth, according to the World Health Organisation. International evidence shows that maternity care provided by midwives is as safe, or safer, than care provided by doctors. Midwifery services are integral to maternity care in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria and Britain.

The Rapporteur recommends that midwife-led units and home birth services, which are central to systems of care in countries such as Germany and The Netherlands, be developed in Western seaboard counties.

6.10 Cancer and other strategies

Teamwork, a Bolton accountancy firm that played a leading role in devising public-private partnerships in the British NHS, is one of several private firms retained to advise the Health Service Executive on its restructuring of the health system. One of Teamwork's regional reports has already been published: others, those done for the mid-western and southern regions, remain unpublished.

Teamwork's 2006 report on the north-east has been defined as a template for the rest of the country. In this document, Teamwork proposed an entirely new way of looking at hospital services, dividing them into 'clinical networks' that would operate across all services, primary or community care, hospital and continuing care. These networks represent

a bundling together of hospital services, such as laboratory testing, and chronic diseases, such as cancer, selected on the basis of profitability. Hospital services are now being radically restructured into elective or planned care, pathology, radiology, chronic disease management, A&E and intensive care. This restructuring provides a foundation for the privatisation of existing public services: profitable areas of health care, such as chronic disease management, are being removed from public hospital control.

Like the national cancer strategy, the Teamwork template also risks deepening existing geographic inequalities.

The health service categories identified by Teamwork correspond to corporate niche markets. Private health care corporations in the United States, for example, have long reaped huge profits in planned care, radiology, pathology and chronic disease management. This perspective sees A&E and intensive care as high-cost and unprofitable services that should be left to publicly funded hospitals to provide.

The Teamwork strategy is already being implemented in Ireland, albeit without public debate. Planned procedures have been outsourced to private for profit hospitals since 2002, through National Treatment Purchase Fund contracts, and more recently, through Health Service Executive purchasing. Privatisation carries significant risks, however: scientific research shows that patient safety may be placed at risk, while the sustainability of public services may be in jeopardy. As the British experience shows, privatisation may compromise access to health services, both on income and geographic grounds, as patients struggle to pay for services formerly provided free of charge, while finding general practitioner services withdrawn from their neighbourhood, replaced by remote polyclinics, as in London.

Patient safety and public service viability issues have already emerged in Ireland in relation to pathology services, which are currently being privatised. Cervical cancer testing has been withdrawn from all public hospitals and outsourced to Quest Diagnostics, a laboratory giant in the United States. General practitioners and laboratory scientists here have expressed strong reservations about the quality of American laboratory testing and its incompatibility with Irish screening practices. The Quest contract has led to significant job losses among Irish medical scientists, terminated cytology in public hospital laboratories and may well lead to their closure. Radiology is now being developed in a way that will

exacerbate existing regional inequalities. Radiology oncology services have been grouped into networks that have left cancer patients in the northern half of the country without accessible services. Four large centres, in Dublin (St James's and Beaumont), Cork and Galway, plus two satellite centres in Waterford and Limerick are to be developed as public-private partnerships. Arrangements enabling the north-west to link to Belfast City Hospital have been promised, but these will be of little practical value to cancer sufferers in areas such as the Inishowen Peninsula.

American models of chronic disease management are now being used in Ireland (Department of Health and Children 2008). Chronic diseases are now being turned into an internal market. Ireland's leading diseases, cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes, have been selected for marketisation. The network or market approach is also being applied to other diseases, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis and musculoskeletal conditions (Department of Health and Children 2008). Services for these diseases will be provided on a contract basis: multiple service 'providers', including private for profit firms, are expected to benefit from the new 'service level agreements'. The national cancer strategy explicitly provides for State contracts to be given to private sector providers. Many, if not all of these for profit facilities are significantly smaller than the public hospitals whose cancer services are being withdrawn.

Cancer is therefore the first of a number of chronic diseases whose care is being restructured. The national cancer strategy offers an illustration of how chronic disease networks will operate. Cancer care is being removed from public hospital control. The new specialist breast cancer centres, for example, will be 'separate entities', outside the management of public hospitals and answering to potentially unaccountable networks linked only to the Health Service Executive. (Depending on how they are structured, these new entities may be free to enter into commercial contracts and to establish joint ventures with private for profit companies, including pharmaceutical corporations.)

The Teamwork plan will see public hospitals left to pay for costly A&E and intensive care services, while niche markets based on disease entities are created for the private sector. Implementing the plan to create chronic disease networks or entities will threaten the economic viability of acute public hospitals, including those in the West.

The Rapporteur recommends that services for chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes, remain integrated under public hospital control, as they are at present.

Segmenting the main killer diseases into independent networks will fragment and destabilise existing public hospital services, not least by removing their principal sources of business. Hospital departments, by their nature, are interdependent: cancer care offers a good illustration of the 'domino effect' in hospital services. Terminating cancer surgery in public hospitals will jeopardise their ability to provide high quality services in other departments, particularly surgery, as Surgeon Kevin Barry, a specialist in breast surgery at Mayo General, has publicly underlined. Surgeons will be unable to operate on, for example, a patient presenting in A&E with a bowel obstruction, lest it be cancerous. Instead of having surgery locally, that patient will be required to travel to a centre approved for cancer surgery, although he may not suffer from cancer. Surgeons, Mr Barry said, will not work in such a difficult environment: the hospital, in consequence, will be unable to attract [or retain] high quality staff.

Again, the cancer strategy offers evidence of the growing disconnect between national health policy and community health needs. Cancer care is being developed in a way that will intensify existing regional imbalances. The cancer strategy virtually ignored the North-West. The O'Higgins Report proposed 12-13 regional cancer units, each with the full range of specialist diagnostic and treatment services: the new cancer strategy limits cancer care to just eight centres. Medical politics, as Dr John Crown observed, ensured that four of the eight went to the main Dublin private non-profit hospitals of Beaumont, the Mater, St James's and St Vincent's. The other four cancer centres are to be located in Cork, Waterford, Galway and Limerick. Only sustained public pressure from voluntary groups, such as Co-operating for Cancer Caré North-West prevented Letterkenny Hospital from losing its services.

Breast cancer has been chosen to spearhead the implementation of the cancer strategy. Hospitals in Naas, Tullamore, Loughlinstown (St Colmcille's), Mallow, Dundalk, Cavan, Navan, Nenagh, Ennis, Dun Laoghaire (St Michael's), Roscommon, Ballinasloe (Portiuncula), and Cork (the Mercy) have been ordered to discontinue breast cancer surgery. Other hospitals, such as Castlebar and Sligo, have been asked to do so on a phased basis. It is widely accepted that withdrawing breast cancer services will place other cancer services, such as bowel cancer, in jeopardy.

Opposition to the cancer strategy has been significant. Western seaboard communities, such as those in Sligo, Mayo and Kerry, to name but three, have voiced serious concerns about the proposed removal of their cancer services.

The robotic centralisation of cancer care is not in patients' interests. A study of cancer patients in the south-west of Scotland, for example, found that 13 per cent of their remaining time on earth was spent travelling to and from hospitals. One 84-year-old, for example, described having to make a one way seven and a half hour journey by ambulance from Stranraer to Edinburgh for radiotherapy.

Implementing the cancer strategy will terminate cancer care not only in smaller public hospitals, but also in medium-sized public facilities. Public hospitals such as those in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee face destabilisation and downgrading, if the national cancer strategy is implemented as planned.

No good scientific evidence has been produced to substantiate the claim that larger volumes of surgery lead to better outcomes for patients, except in the case of a very small number of highly complex procedures. On the contrary: a recent large scale study published in the British Medical Journal found no relationship between the number of surgical procedures performed and survival rates for that particular operation. Death rates were unrelated to volumes.

The claim has been made that the new specialist breast cancer clinics will offer increased survival prospects to sufferers, but no evidence has been produced to support this assertion. Mayo General clinicians believe they can compete with the proposed new centres of specialization. Surgeon Kevin Barry has publicly affirmed that he would be 'happy, professionally, and ethically, and morally' to provide breast cancer services in a satellite centre, provided it was linked to a larger institution. Mayo General Hospital, he told the Western People, could provide survival outcomes that are as good as those of a centre of specialisation.

The Rapporteur recommends that the national cancer strategy be revised to provide for a balanced regional approach, particularly in relation to surgery and radiology. See references, Appendix 6, page 117.

Chapter 7: Education and Childcare

Key Messages

- ✦ A recent report entitled 'A study on the effects of the community childcare subvention scheme' estimated that working parents will see childcare fees rise by between 50% and 166% over costs in 2007.
- ✦ In comparison to other countries, Ireland spends just .2% of Gross Domestic Product compared to at least 1% of GDP in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and France on childcare subventions.
- ✦ Despite the current economic climate childcare costs must be addressed in the form of subventions with a target for reducing childcare costs by 50% for middle income families and reducing childcare costs by 75% for low income families.
- ✦ There are 818 primary schools operating with less than four teachers nationally.
- ✦ In a 2004 study of two-teacher schools it was found that while teachers felt there were many positive benefits with multi-grade teaching, it requires more planning and management than single-grade teaching.
- ✦ Of the 396 applications from primary schools in counties Kerry, Cork, Clare, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal only 72 applications (18%) have progressed beyond initial stages.
- ✦ To address the problems of administration, teacher support, buildings and materials, smaller rural primary schools should be encouraged to operate cluster programmes, which would have one person employed to undertake administrative and other ancillary work. Clustering would also involve joint parent organisation meetings and the sharing of resources.
- ✦ While the number of distance learning courses available to the public is increasing through public and private third-level education institutions, the development of these courses appears to be on an ad hoc basis, without any real strategic planning in terms of the needs of people, particularly those in rural locations.
- ✦ For adults who wish to attain better qualifications and skills, they are often compelled to commute to

colleges and Institutes of Technology in the larger urban centres.

- ✦ In the upcoming review on Open and Distance Learning the expert group appointed by the Higher Education Authority should ensure that regional development and the needs of rural populations are central to any recommendations.

7.1 Childcare

If the Western seaboard region is to increase its retention of college graduates and to attract young families to the Western seaboard region in greater numbers, the delivery of childcare services and the support of community childcare must be prioritised. The proper development of community childcare is fundamental in assisting families to increase their incomes and in providing for early childhood education.

The cost of childcare services has been steadily increasing since the commencement of the Childcare Investment Programme. In a submission to the Joint Committee it was highlighted that childcare costs in county Leitrim have increased in full day costs from €110 per week to €145-€160 per week while seasonal preschool care has increased from €7 per day to €10-€15 per day in the past year. Afterschool care has increased from €9 per day to €12-€16 per hour. Some services have reported a decrease in numbers, due mainly to the soaring costs. In particular afterschool childcare services have been declining reflecting the financial strain on working parents.

Evidence of increasing childcare costs has been highlighted in a recent report "A Study of the Effects of the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme", which estimates that working parents will see childcare fees rise by 50-166% over costs in 2007.

Childcare costs in Ireland are far above the EU average, with Irish families spending 20% of their incomes on full-time crèche facilities compared with 12% of income for families in the rest of Europe. While the Government spent €406 million on childcare supplements in 2007, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) has stated that it is "actually making very little difference to the overall childcare costs for parents". Orla

O'Connor, head of policy at the NWCI, says the Council is "very aware of the current economic crisis" but believes that the Government still needs to "significantly redistribute resources in order to prioritise" the issue of childcare⁷⁶. Ireland spends just .2% of Gross Domestic Product compared to at least 1% of Gross Domestic Product in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and France. In a recent European Commission report Ireland was ranked bottom of a league table for spending on childcare. Orla O'Connor has stated that there is a need to reduce childcare costs by 50% for all middle income earning parents and 75% for low income parents through a new national subsidisation scheme.

The current rate at which childcare service costs are increasing is unsustainable. If the Government continues with the current strategy or decreases spending on childcare, some Irish parents will be forced to stay at home or even emigrate. Any reductions in the number of skilled workers will only limit the state's ability to turn the economy around. For this reason there is a need to refocus on childcare with the goal of reducing childcare costs for low and middle income families.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ♦ **an urgent review by the Office of the Minister for Children of the soaring costs of childcare, with a focus on reducing childcare costs by 50% for all families and 75% for low income families while setting a target of 1% of GDP to be spent on childcare.**
- ♦ **equal access to good childcare and a reversal to the changes in the Child Care Subvention Scheme.**

7.2 Primary education

Smaller primary schools are a major feature of the education system in Western seaboard counties. There are 818 primary schools operating with less than four teachers nationally⁷⁷. Modern research has shown that smaller primary schools not only match larger schools in the quality of education but that there are also a number of advantages in smaller school environments. Research in Britain has shown that curriculum provision is similar to that of larger schools while pupils in smaller schools tend to become more engaged academically and socially when class sizes are reduced⁷⁸. An additional benefit is that teachers are more pro-active and less reactive in

smaller primary schools when managing student behaviour. Furthermore, modern research has now demonstrated that there are no significant differences in academic achievement between children in a multi-grade classrooms compared to children in single-grade classrooms.

Despite the many positive features of smaller primary schools there are a number of significant challenges. Teaching in multi-grade classes requires more preparation, organisation and planning than single-grade teaching. In a 2004 study of two-teacher schools it was found that while teachers felt there were many positive benefits with multi-grade teaching, it requires more planning and management than single-grade teaching⁷⁹. Furthermore a number of teachers felt that the support and resources in place were inadequate.

Another difficulty for teachers in two or three teacher schools is isolation. Innovation and creative thinking primarily derives from the learning community of teachers rather than an individual teacher being made aware of the need for change. A 2001 review by Richardson and Placier opined that interaction between colleagues is crucial for teaching development. The role and responsibilities of teaching principals have evolved and increased over the past fifteen years. The 1999 Report on the Primary School Principal stated: "primary principals, particularly teaching principals, because of increases in management and administrative functions, cannot devote sufficient concentrated effort to leadership functions which have increased in importance due to the rapidity of change, changing mores and demands for curriculum innovation" (p.85-86). As a result of this there has been a declining number of teachers interested in applying for principalships⁸⁰. With teaching principals also having to cope with multi-grade classes, the burden on principals in smaller schools is greater.

Primary schools suffer in the provision of buildings and equipment. An INTO survey in 2004 found that 80% of schools surveyed in Donegal, 63% of schools in Clare and 70% of schools in Kerry did not have a PE Hall. The picture was very different in Dublin schools where only 14% of schools did not have a PE hall. Of the 396 applications under the school building programme in counties Kerry, Cork, Clare, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal, only 72 applications (18%) are currently progressing through architectural planning⁸¹.

In order to address the lack of human resources and

76 Irish Times Monday 13th of October, 2008

77 Department of Education Statistics

78 Irish Primary Principals Network 'New Horizons for Smaller Schools' p.10

79 (mulryan-Kane, 2004)

80 INTO 1999

81 Response to a parliamentary question, 14th of October, 2008 Uimhir 354

infrastructure deficiencies in smaller primary schools, a number of different clustering projects should be promoted. In 'Why are some principals handing back the keys?' (Ryan, 2003) it was recommended that there should be a manager/principal/administrator to manage a small cluster of schools. A further report entitled 'New Horizons for Smaller Schools' recommended that a cluster policy should be encouraged for smaller schools. Building on a number of examples internationally, the report highlighted that boards of management for small clusters of schools, 'cluster boards', have been promoted in New Zealand and other countries, whereas in Queensland, Australia smaller schools were clustered to make better use of equipment and building resources. The report argued that a number of benefits accrued from this clustering such as the sharing of best practice among teachers, saying that "there has been a general improvement in student outcomes in most Key Learning Areas"⁸².

There are already examples of clustering in ICT, sports and other activities in Ireland. However, the report concluded that the support for clustering if provided in a disjointed way only undermines the concept of clustering and collaboration.

While clustering small schools could enable schools to increase their human, material and building resources, it is important that smaller national schools retain their own identity and autonomy. For an effective clustering policy to take off, smaller schools need to work out their own model and management structure within broader guidelines and support. A cluster programme should not be imposed upon schools and it is important to attract schools in the form of some increased funding for extra human and material resources. It is therefore imperative that a clustering policy adds to the schools' resources rather than subtracting from them.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ♦ **that clustering for smaller schools should be encouraged by way of grants for clustering projects;**
- ♦ **a cluster coordinator should be provided as an extra post of responsibility;**
- ♦ **that a variety of models needs to be explored in different counties depending on the spatial proximity and human and material resources of the schools. It is therefore recommended that a number of projects should be piloted in the Western**

seaboard counties;

♦ that consideration should be given to the following cluster initiatives:

- » a public networking body operating under the county boards to coordinate and roll-out small clustering of schools and the coordination of administrative and material support;
- » a person or persons employed for a cluster of schools to undertake administrative and other ancillary work;
- » the appointment of specialised teachers in IT, drama or PE on a permanent clustered schools basis;
- » joint board of management meetings;
- » joint parent organisation meetings;
- » sharing of exercises and expertise;
- » sharing of resources

7.3 Distance Learning

As a consequence of the low level of attainment of third-level graduates in the Western seaboard Region, there is a disproportional level of the Western seaboard's workforce without third-level qualifications⁸³. Apart from initiating programmes to retain third-level graduates through more job opportunities, there should be regional initiatives to support adult education programmes. Through the development of education programmes, the Western seaboard Region could increase the skills and training of its workforce. It has been highlighted that the majority of the Western seaboard's population is based in rural areas. Adults who wish to attain better qualifications and skills, are often compelled to commute to colleges and Institutes of Technology in the larger urban centres. There have been a number of developments in distance learning over the past decade: universities and training institutions such as NUI Galway, UCD, DCU, FÁS E-Learning and the National College of Ireland offer a number of courses and diplomas in distance learning. In private education, Hibernia College offers a number of continuous professional development courses in subjects such as post-primary teaching, business and management and pharmaceutical medicine.

While the number of distance learning courses available to

82 Queensland Govt Report, 2001, p.27

83 See Chapter 1.5

the public is increasing through public and private third-level education institutions, the development of these courses appears to be on an ad hoc basis without any real strategic planning in terms of the needs of people, particularly those in rural locations. In order to ensure that the social and economic needs of the Western seaboard Region are met through higher education and distance learning, a review of the available distance learning courses is required to ascertain whether there are sufficient courses available to meet the needs of rural areas. The Higher Education Authority has recently undertaken a policy study on higher and open education by establishing an expert group. The study shall focus on demand for distance learning in Ireland and bring forward recommendations for the development of a national strategy. There is no mention of regional development or the needs of rural areas in the terms of reference of the expert group⁸⁴. In developing a national strategy on open and distance learning, there is a danger that the particular needs of the regions will be overlooked and that a uniform strategy will be adapted for the state as a whole. It is desirable that the expert group should give careful consideration to the needs of rural population and to regional social and economic development.

The Rapporteur recommends that the Higher Education Authority's expert group on open and distance learning should be mandated to have regard to the economic, social and educational needs of the regions when bringing forward proposals for a national strategy on higher and open education.

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Chapter 8: Garda and An Post Services

Key Messages

- ✦ In counties Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway and Roscommon nearly half of all Garda stations are reduced to 1 Garda operating on a part time basis. In many instances Garda stations are closed on Sundays while opening hours during the week are limited to between 10am and 1pm.
- ✦ The limited opening hours and lack of Garda strength in rural stations has given rise to the perception that Garda services are effectively ceasing to exist in many rural areas.
- ✦ In order to ensure the proper functioning of Garda stations in rural areas there needs to be a minimum of 2 Gardaí present while stations are open. Increasing Garda strength can be achieved by continuing the process of civilianising Garda administrative services to international standards.
- ✦ Between 2001 and 2008 344 post offices closed in Ireland, with the majority of closures taking place in the Western seaboard region.
- ✦ The Irish Postmasters Union has stated that post master incomes in rural areas can be as little as €10,000 per year, the vast bulk of which derives from social welfare services.
- ✦ Post offices are seen as a 'lifeline' for many people living in rural areas. In many small towns and villages post offices remain the only public institution.
- ✦ An Post have cited declining rural populations and local inhabitants choosing to commute to post offices in larger towns as the main factors behind the closure of local post offices.
- ✦ While commercial services can contribute to the income of postmasters, it appears that an enhanced role in the delivery of state social services may be the most effective way of securing the viability of post offices in rural areas.
- ✦ There is need for a clear Government policy in relation to the minimum number of post offices that are deemed to be necessary. In order to save a number of post offices at risk of imminent closure, the Government should intervene in the form of a public service obligation order (PSO).

8.1 Garda Stations

Table 1 below demonstrates the limited nature of Garda services in the Western seaboard counties. In a response to a parliamentary question, the Minister for Justice stated that no Garda stations had been closed down in the Western seaboard coastal area in the past 5 years. However, as Table 1 demonstrates the total Garda strength in some towns on the Western seaboard can be as limited to one or zero Gardaí. In counties Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway and Roscommon nearly half of all Garda stations are reduced to one Garda operating at stations and in many instances no Garda services are available on Sundays while during the week opening hours are limited to between 10am and 1pm. Garda stations located in Ballinspittle, Drinagh, Ballydesmond, Rearcross, Leannaun, Kiltomer and Clonark had no actual Garda strength whatsoever. The opening times are irregular; services depend on whether Gardaí can be sent from other stations.

Table 1 ⁸⁵

District	Strength	Monday-Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Ballineen	1	10am - 1pm	10am - 1pm	10am - 1pm
Adrigole	1	10am - 1pm	10am - 1pm	10am - 1pm
Ballygurteen	0			
Ballyferriter	1	4.30 - 5.30pm	4.30 - 5.30pm	Closed
Kilgarvan	1	10am - 1pm	Closed	Closed
Rearcross	0	2.30-4.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Carndolla	1	10am - 1pm	10am - 1pm	10am - 1pm
Athleague	2	10am - 11am	6pm - 7pm	Closed

In its 2007 report 'Policing in Ireland – Looking Forward' the Garda Inspectorate found that "in many instances small rural stations were serviced by one officer answering to a district headquarters, but mostly operating alone, without ready access to supervisors, an official car or Garda IT systems". The Inspectorate recommended the implementation of "a consistent rural policing model that enhances visibility

85 86 Selection of towns based on data provided in a response to a parliamentary question.

and makes best use of Garda resources in serving local communities”.

The limited opening hours and lack of Garda strength in rural stations has given rise to the perception that Garda services are ceasing to exist in many rural areas. A centralised Garda service will increase rural isolation and undermine the people’s sense of security in their homes. There is increasing evidence that police station closures can lead to increases in crime. In England, where rural areas have seen similar cut backs in police services, crime figures have surged. Violent crime rose by 119 per cent in country areas between 1998/99 and 2006/07 - compared with a national increase of 108%⁸⁶.

In ‘Policing in Ireland – Looking Forward’, the Garda Inspectorate recommended that “neighbouring rural stations would pool their personnel and be allocated additional shared resources such as transport, information technology and administrative support to boost visibility and efficiency. This could be done without impacting significantly on current Garda assignments to individual rural stations so as to preserve the strong relationship between those Gardaí and the communities they serve”. This rather vague statement could only have limited impact on Garda services in rural areas. Furthermore, it appears that local stations are already pooling their resources. The essential problem is Garda numbers and how to allocate such numbers. To enable more Gardaí to man rural stations it is necessary that the policy of civilianising administrative work continues.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ♦ **a coherent strategy to maximise Garda visibility in rural areas;**
- ♦ **administrative services need to be civilianised and brought up to 40% of the total workforce within the Garda service in line with international standards, to ensure that more Gardaí are available at rural stations;**

8.2 Post Offices

With the closure of local public houses and the downgrading of Garda services, postal services represent one of the last community institutions in western rural areas. Post office

services provide particular facilities to groups such as elderly people who depend upon them for collecting their pension. They help to maintain a sense of community in many rural areas. A report by Age Concern found that 99% of older people in rural areas regarded post offices as a “lifeline”⁸⁷.

Similarly to other essential services, the future of post offices in rural areas is under threat. Between 2001 and 2008, 344 post offices have closed, the majority of closures have happened in the Western seaboard region⁸⁸. In Donegal alone 26 post offices were closed or downgraded between 2000 and 2007. The state trend has accelerated in recent years with 144 postal closures between 2006 and 2008. The level of closures has raised concerns from organisations such as St Vincent’s de Paul about the social impact on local communities. Mairead Bushnell, the national president of the St Vincent de Paul charity, has stated “the service goes well beyond the provision of postal services and helps to sustain a number of key social supports and services for many vulnerable people...the value of (this) human contact in the lives of many people far outweighs the cost measured on a balance sheet”⁸⁹.

An Post have attributed the closure of local post offices to declining rural populations and local inhabitants choosing to commute to post offices in larger towns. The traditional functions of post offices are now achieved by cheaper alternatives e.g. letters can be accepted through post boxes and stamps can be sold through vending machines. Email has also provided a cheaper alternative to post office products and new operators have increased their presence in niche markets such as the delivery of packages, parcels and time sensitive documents.

While the postal network has seen an expansion in services such a banking, such measures are ‘off-the shelf’ and cannot address the declining demand for postal services⁹⁰. The Irish Postmasters Union has stated that the income of post masters in rural areas can be as little as €10,000 per year, the vast bulk of which derives from social welfare services. Given that the income is below the minimum wage, very few people are likely to replace postmasters who retire in rural areas. The Flynn Report reported that a core group account for 80% of revenues, namely, social welfare payments, TV licences for RTE, and bill payments for ESB. A number of these postal services,

86 cent Rural Areas ‘Suffering From Closure Of Police Stations’ (Britain) Daily Mail (Britain) ^ | March 22, 2008 | James Slack

87 Matt Weaver guardian.co.uk, Wednesday October 18 2006

88 Figure as at January 2008

89 V de P says post office closures leading to isolation”, The Irish Times, 18 January 2008

90 A Report for the Irish Post Masters Union p.8

however, are being removed from post offices as An Post continue to oversee the downgrading of surviving post offices to postal agencies.

There is a need for clarity in government postal service policy. The continued closure or downgrading of An Post services could potentially damage the social fabric of communities irrevocably. Ireland continues to be out of sync with the rest of the EU in relation to the minimum criteria for postal services. In two thirds of EU countries, there are specific criteria for the postal network such as the number of post offices per head of population. The current government policy has been described as 'vague' and only contributes to the decline of the postal network⁹¹.

The Rapporteur recommends that specific criteria be set in relation to the size and distribution of postal network, which would take into account socioeconomic factors, demographics, geographic areas and the minimum distance to post offices.

8.3 International experiences

Essex County Council developed a rescue scheme in response to the 32 post offices within their county which were scheduled for closure. It was proposed that local county councils should step in and subsidise post offices facing closure. The scheme was subsequently adopted by over 50 councils including Leeds, Darlington, Durham and Lancashire. In order to recuperate some of the investment, Essex County Council adopted a number of practices such as combining postal services with council services, developing post offices as centres of information, making door-to-door delivery of parcels and also delivering welfare payments such as pensions to the doors of customers. It is important to note that door-to-door delivery should only be made to persons with impaired mobility, as otherwise it only encourages people not to go to their post offices. In the Californian town of Carmel, the door-to-door system was reversed in order to get people to begin going to the post office again⁹². The reversal also encouraged neighbourly meetings in post office buildings.

There are a number of opportunities for post offices to diversify through social support schemes and business services. In France "Help at Home" services are offered and on purchase of the "genius" card (EUR 9.50) government registered providers

can be contacted in relation to housekeeping, gardening, baby-sitting and support for the elderly. In Japan, post office staff check on living conditions of elderly people and there is an ordering service for daily necessities⁹³.

The Rapporteur recommends that the following services that could be expanded in rural post offices should be examined as a matter of priority:

- ✦ combining postal services with council services to provide insurance and taxation services;
- ✦ developing post offices as centres of information;
- ✦ making door-to-door delivery of parcels to people with impaired mobility;
- ✦ delivering welfare payments such as pensions to the doors of customers with impaired mobility;
- ✦ ordering delivery service for elderly people for daily necessities;
- ✦ information service on childcare services;
- ✦ information service on local transport;
- ✦ combining postal services with Business Points;
- ✦ initiating community activities such as community meetings in post offices.

8.4 Possible State initiatives

Post offices are often the only remaining outlet in many rural areas in the Western seaboard. Rural transport programmes are ill-equipped to offer access to post offices while travelling to post offices in other towns is both time consuming and ecologically damaging. Even if adequate public transport existed, the damage to the social fabric of rural communities would be immeasurable. A number of initiatives have been taken in other countries to prevent the closure of post offices through developing the types of social services on offer. While An Post is mandated by legislation to only engage in profit making initiatives, the State could intervene in the form of a public service obligation order (PSO). If the EU were to authorise a PSO order, post offices scheduled for closure could be entitled to a subvention and therefore broaden their services to ensure their viability.

The Rapporteur recommends:

91 Review in the Developments of the Post Office
92 Simon Jenkins The Guardian, Wednesday March 19 2008

93 'Experiences in Dealing with Post Office Closures' Northern Ireland Assembly Research Paper p.5

- ✦ that the Government intervenes in the form of a Public Service Intervention order to enable the subvention of post offices in rural areas along the Western seaboard region to ensure post masters' incomes are brought to the minimum wage as a matter of priority;
- ✦ that county councils should be given special funding as a matter of priority to roll out the subvention and prevent post offices from closing. Such an intervention should be done in tandem with a reform package to enable postal services scheduled for closure to reform and deliver more social services;

Chapter 9: Social Exclusion and Community Development

Key Messages

- ✦ **The percentage of people at risk of poverty and in consistent poverty is higher in almost all Western seaboard counties than in eastern counties.**
- ✦ **The Combat Agency Report emphasised that there was little evidence of a causal relationship between poverty and location per se: the socio-economic compositions of households, along with inadequate services, low-paid work and non-participation in the labour force are the main factors which determine poverty.**
- ✦ **There are currently 180 community development projects and 10 support agencies funded under the Community Development Programme**
- ✦ **A common problem for community development projects is accessing funding through different state departments and agencies, which leads to problems in covering the cost of programmes of activities.**
- ✦ **Channelling funding through one single department for local development projects could lead to more efficiency and make funding schemes more accessible.**

9.1 Poverty

As a result of deficiencies in infrastructure and economic development, social imbalances have manifested themselves at a regional level. CSO data shows that while there has been an improvement since 2000, disposal income in the S&E region amounts to 103% of the national average compared to 91.7% for the Border Midlands and Western (BMW) region.

Similarly to other data collected by state agencies and departments, the main data on poverty levels in Ireland is broken down by the BMW and S&E regions. Based on the annual Survey on Income and Living Conditions in Ireland (EU-SILC) it was estimated that in the BMW region in 2006, 9.2% of the population were living in consistent poverty compared with 6.4% for the Southern and Eastern region. The number of people categorised as at-risk-of poverty was also higher than the equivalent figure for the S&E region: 26.2% compared to 13.7%.

The only recent research that gives a more detailed picture of the West, is the Combat Agency 2005 Report "Mapping Poverty: National, Regional and County Patterns". The report highlighted that the percentage of people at risk of poverty and in consistent poverty is higher in almost all Western seaboard counties than in eastern coastal counties. While the Combat Agency Report emphasised that there was little evidence of a causal relationship between poverty and location per se, the socio-economic compositions of households, along with inadequate services, low-paid work and non-participation in the labour force are the main factors which determine poverty.

Barriers to accessing public services have been highlighted as a central cause of social exclusion. In England, a report entitled 'Accession', suggested that poor accessibility was at the root of many problems of social exclusion and deprivation, both in urban and rural settings. It said that the problem needed to be tackled in a holistic fashion, with action taken both to improve the availability of facilities and services in rural areas and improve transport provision in areas where it was not available. The National Economic and Social Council describes access to a wide set of services such as education, health, childcare, eldercare, transport and employment services as described as 'essential to attaining the workforce quality that underpins a competitive, knowledge-based economy, to maintaining social cohesion and combating social exclusion'⁹⁴. It concludes that the first public policy priority is to ensure the public has access to the level and quality of service, with quality and equity being assured.

9.2 Community development

There are currently 180 community development projects and 10 support agencies funded under the Community Development Programme. There were just 15 development projects in 1990. The function of development projects is to have an anti-poverty, anti-exclusion focus and promote the participation of people experiencing poverty and exclusion

⁹⁴ Office of Social Inclusion 'National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016'

at all levels of the project. There are five central elements to community, namely, to work from community development principles and methods; provide support and act as a catalyst for community development activity; act as a resource in the communities of which they are a part of; provide coordination and cooperation between community, voluntary and statutory groups in their areas; and involve representatives of groups which experience poverty and social exclusion within their management structures.

A common problem for development projects is accessing funding through different state departments and agencies, which leads to problems in covering the cost of programmes of activities. A single Government Department could be given responsibility for all funding earmarked for community and development work rather than through numerous agencies and departments. The funding could be divided into broad categories, which would enable each group to identify the funding schemes that are available for their particular project. Channelling funding through one single department could lead to more efficiency and make funding schemes more accessible.

The Rapporteur recommends that:

- ✦ **funding for Community Development Projects should be channelled through one Government Department. A single Government Department should therefore be given responsibility for administering all community and voluntary funding. Funding for development projects could then be divided into broad categories, which would enable community groups to see if their workplan and projects are eligible;**
- ✦ **regional data on poverty should be collected and published on an annual basis.**

Caibidil 10: Na hOileáin

Eochair-theachtaireachtaí

- ✦ D'ainneoin méadú ar chaiteachas poiblí agus feabhsuithe bonneagair, tá meath ar dhaonra na nOileán go fóill.
- ✦ Is é an dúshlán is mó atá roimh na hOileáin ná daoine óga a choinneáil ar na hoileáin. Is é atá ag teastáil ná dianchur chuige ón rialtas chun rochtain ar na hoileáin agus deiseanna fostaíochta a fheabhsú agus soláthar bunseirbhísí sóisialta a ráthú.
- ✦ Maidir le soláthar sláinte, le leas sóisialta, le fostaíocht agus le hoideachas is í an rochtain an tsaincheist is mó do phobail na n-oileán.
- ✦ Toisc gur tháinig meath ar earnálacha traidisúnta fostaíochta amhail an iascaireacht, is gá díriú ar fhoinsí nua fostaíochta inbhuanaithe
- ✦ Ní minic a bhíonn an mhais chriticiúil i bpobail oileán ná sna déimeagrafaic a theastaíonn ó ghníomhaireachtaí maoinithe nuair a mheastar iarratais le haghaidh cúram leanaí. D'fhéadfaí gur ghá áiseanna a chomhthiomsú le pobail eile lena chinntiú go bhfuil cúram leanaí curtha ar fáil do na hoileáin.
- ✦ Is fiordhúshlán é an easpa rogha maidir le hábhair scoile do scoileanna oileáin chun líon daltaí a choinneáil. Chuige sin d'fhéadfaí go mbeadh sé riachtanach don Roinn Oideachais beartas a dhearadh chun múinteoirí a chur chuig na hoileáin ar bhonn seachtainiúil nó coicíse.

10.1 Forbhreathnú ar na hOileáin

Ta 33 oileán a bhfuil cónaí orthu agus 2,945 de daonra eatarthu, iad gar don chósta idir Reachlainn i gContae Aontroma, síos taobh le Dún na nGall, Sligeach, Maigh Eo, Gaillimh agus Corcaigh. Faoin PFN 2007-2013 tá €126 milliún curtha ar leataobh ag an rialtas leis na pobail seo a chothabháil.

D'ainneoin na méaduithe ar chaiteachas poiblí agus feabhsuithe i mbonneagar, tá meath go fóill ar dhaonra na nOileán. Is é an dúshlán is mó roimh na hOileáin ná daoine óga a choinneáil ar na hOileáin. Is é atá ag teastáil ná dianchur chuige ón rialtas chun rochtain ar na hoileáin agus deiseanna

fostaíochta a fheabhsú agus soláthar bunseirbhísí sóisialta a ráthú. Ba é tionscal na hiascaireachta an príomhfhostóir i gcaitheamh na haimsire, agus mar sin an phríomhfhoinsé ioncaim. Amhail gach pobal iascaireachta in Éirinn, áfach, tháinig meath suntasach ar an tionscadal. Os a choinne sin, tá saol an oileáin agus saol na hiascaireachta fite fuaite trína chéile agus d'ainneoin gur tháinig meath ar thionscal na hiascaireachta, tá sé go fóill mar fhoinsé ioncaim agus mar chuid thábhachtach den gheilleagar. I rith mhíonna an tsamhraidh is í an turasóireacht an fhoinsé is mó ioncaim ar mhórán oileán. Is é an locht is mó atá ar an earnáil seo, áfach, ná gur earnáil shéasúrach í, a fhágann go mbíonn easpa deiseanna fostaíochta ann do na hoileánaigh i rith an gheimhridh.

Molann an Comhchoiste go dtugann an Rialtas chun tosaigh Cairt um Chearta, bunaithe ar riachtanais na n-oileán ar leith, a bheadh ráthaithe sa dlí. Ba iad na cearta seo mar bhonn de straitéis chun daoine a mhealladh chuig na hoileáin agus chun daoine óga a mhealladh le fanacht ann. Is é a bheadh sa chairt ná an ceart chun rochtana ar na hoileáin trí chéanna cearta agus aerstráicí, le spriocanna agus scálaí ama agus an ceart chun seirbhísí éigeantacha sóisialta.

10.2 Bonneagar

Is iad na saincheisteanna is tábhachtaí do phobail na n-oileán ná an rochtain agus an bonneagar. Má táthar lena chinntiú go bhfanann na hoileáin ceangailte den mhórthír ní mór infheistíocht a dhéanamh i roinnt eochair-réimsí.

Is é a mholann an Comhchoiste ná:

- ✦ go leanfar le hinfheistíocht a dheanamh i mbonneagar amhail aerstráicí, céanna agus héileapadanna a chothabháil lena chinntiú go bhfuil cáilíocht an bhonneagair coinnithe;
- ✦ gur chóir teicneolaíocht físchomhdhála a rolladh amach do gach oileán mar aon le clár tionscnamh le haghaidh frontar agus seirbhísí chun úsáid na físchomhdhála a uasmhéadú; agus
- ✦ gur chóir go mbeadh forbairt cheart beartais ann lena chinntiú go bhfuil freastal déanta ar riachtanais shóisialta agus eacnamaíochta mhuintir an oileáin ag na seirbhísí farantóireachta mar shampla ag taisteal chun na hoibre agus rochtain ar sheirbhísí, roimh chonarthaí farantóireachta a bhronnadh.

10.3 Talmhaíochta agus Iascaireacht

Is ríthabachtach an fheirmeoireacht do na hoileáin chun pobail a chothabháil agus le leas an chomhshaoil. Cé nach mór d'fheirmeoirí bheith ag brath ar fhoinsí eile ioncaim is tábhachtach é fós de bhíthin gur lú na cineálacha eile fostaíochta ar na hoileáin. Is deacair an fheirmeoireacht a chothabháil toisc méaduithe ar chostais chun ainmhithe a iompar agus is airde i bhfad costas cúram tréidliachta.

Is é a mholann an comhchoiste:

- ✦ go mbeadh catagóir ar leith ann do Cheantair Mhídeheisiúla is é sin – Talamh ar Oileáin Amach ón gCósta lena n-íocfar cúiteamh ar ráta níos airde ná an ráta is airde a íoctar faoi láthair;
- ✦ gur chóir Oileánaigh a spreagadh chun a bheith páirteach i dturasóireacht feirme agus chun táirgí orgánacha talmhaíochta a sholáthar trí chlár oileáin um thurasóireacht feirme;
- ✦ gur chóir infheistíocht sa bhonneagar a dhíriú ar an iascaireacht agus ba chóir socrúithe a dhéanamh le haghaidh céanna agus cuain atá fóirsteanach, fuarstóráil, oighear agus bunphróiseáil;
- ✦ ba chóir comharchumainn agus cuideachtaí forbartha Oileáin a éascú chun ceadúnais iascaireachta agus/nó 'tonnáiste' ilfhiúsach a cheannach a d'fhéadfaí a ligean ar cíós d'iascairí oileán ar mian leo dul isteach sa tionscal nó ar mhain leo a n-oibríochtaí iascaireachta a leathnú. Ba chóir tonnáiste atá ar díol a bheith teoranta do na hoileáin amháin. Ba chóir ceadúnais imeall trá, nuair nach úsáidtear iad, a chur i dtaisce le bheith ceannaithe nó le bheith úsáidte ag oileánaigh eile amach anseo;
- ✦ gur chóir comharchumainn agus cuideachtaí forbartha Oileáin a éascú agus iad ag iarraidh ceadúnais le haghaidh dobharshaothraithe.

10.4 Forbairt Fiontar

Leis na dúshlán os comhair earnálacha traidisiúnta fostaíochta is é an bealach is éifeachtaí chun inbhuanú fhadtéarmach na n-oileán a chinntiú ná fiontar a fhorbairt. Tá roinnt tionscnamh is féidir a chur i bhfeidhm chun fiontar a chothú ar na hoileáin:

- ✦ ba chóir go mbeadh straitéis chruthaithe fostaíochta ó Údarás na Gaeltachta bunaisthe ar riachtanais gach oileáin;

- ✦ go ndreachtódh ranna ollscoile agus rialtais beartas chun obair riaracháin a fhoinsiú ar na hoileáin;
- ✦ gur chóir tacú le comhchumainn oileáin/ cuideachtaí forbartha chun próifíl a n-oileáin a fhorbairt ina bhfuil eolas ar sheirbhísí, ar dhéimeagrafaic, ar scileanna srl. a bheadh úsáideach d'fhostóirí/ d'fhostaithe agus d'fhiontraithe féideartha.

10.5 Oideachas

Is gá gurb é an cúram leanaí ina eochair-eilimint de bheartas oileáin mar gheall ar chineál athraitheach phobal an oileáin. Ní minic a thugann pobail oileáin agus déimeagrafaic an mhais chriticiúil a iarrann gníomhaireachtaí maoinithe agus iad ag meas iarratas le haghaidh cúram leanaí. Le gur féidir tabhairt faoi sin, ba chóir tionscadail mhaoinithe cúram leanaí a bhronnadh in éineacht le tionscadail eile, a chomhthiomsódh ábhair agus acmhainní daonna le chéile.

Ar an gcaoi cheánna le ceantair bheaga tuaithe, bíonn tionchar dochrach ar scoileanna oileáin de bharr easpa tacaíocht múinteoireachta agus riaracháin. Is fiordhúslán é an easpa rogha ar fáil maidir le hábhair scoile de chun líon daltaí a choinneáil. Is gá mar sin, mar íoschaighdeán ar a laghad a choinneáil do gach scoil, beirt mhúinteoirí lánaimseartha a bheith i láthair i ngach scoil oileáin. Ar a bharr sin, ba chóir don Roinn Oideachas beartas a dhearadh chun múinteoirí a chur chuig na hoileáin ar bhonn seachtainiúil nó coicíse chun roinnt eochair-ábhar dara leibhéal a mhúineadh. Beart eile atá in úsáid in áiteanna iargcúlta sa tSualainn is ea an múineadh trí fhíschomhdháil. Ba chóir an dá bheart a athbhreithniú mar ábhar tosaíochta.

Is gá, má táthar lena chinntiú go bhfuil scoileanna Gaeltachta ag baint tairbhe as seirbhísí nua oideachais go mbeadh rochtain ar theiripeoirí urlabhra agus ar shíceolaithe a bhfuil Gaeilge líofa acu ráthaithe do scoileanna Gaeltachta. Ba chóir an córas chun scoláireachtaí a sholáthar do scoláirí a fhreastalaíonn ar scoileanna oileáin i gceantair Ghaeltachta a fhorbairt agus a mhéadú.

Molann an Comhchoiste gur chóir reachtaíocht a chur i bhfeidhm a bhaineann le cearta oideachasúla go háirithe do phobail oileáin a chinnteodh nach mór do na bearta a leanas a sholáthar do phobail na n-oileán:

- ✦ gur chóir go mbeadh leanaí an oileáin in ann teacht ar oideachas réamhscoile ar feadh bliana

sula dtéann siad isteach sa gcóras oideachas príomhshrutha;

- ✦ gur chóir go mbeadh beirt mhúinteoirí lánaimseartha ag gach scoil nó múinteoir amháin agus cúntóir lánaimseartha ar a laghad;
- ✦ ba chóir síceolaithe oideachais agus teiripeoirí urlabhra atá líofa sa Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil ar na hoileáin Ghaeltachta;
- ✦ ba chóir raon iomlán ábhar dara leibhéal a mhúineadh i scoileanna oileáin trí mhúinteoirí a chur chuig na hoileáin ar bhonn páirtaimseartha nó trí físchomhdháil.

10.6 Seirbhísí Sláinte agus Sóisialta

Is ríthábhachtach seirbhís sláinte ionrochtaineach a bheith ann chun pobail oileáin a chothabháil agus chun daoine eile a mhealladh chun cónaí a dheanamh ann. Mar gheall ar an iargúlacht bíonn othair agus seanothair go háirithe ag brath ar chuidirteanna ó ghairmithe sláinte.

Is é a mholann an Comhchoiste:

- ✦ gur chóir níos mó de rogha a thabhairt do mhná oileáin maidir le cúram cnáimhseachais, cuairteanna ar an oileán ó mhná ghlúine san áireamh. Ba chóir do FSS an ceart chun rochtana ar mhná glúine a ráthú;
- ✦ gur chóir seirbhísí tánaisteacha amhail cosliacht a chur ar fáil go tráthrialta; agus
- ✦ nach mór do phearsanra na seirbhíse sláinte a thugann cuairt ar na ceantair Ghaeltachta Gaeilge líofa a bheith acu.

Chapter 10: The Islands

Key Messages

- ✦ **Despite a number of initiatives and the many efforts on the part of islanders, the population of the islands continues to decline.**
- ✦ **The greatest single challenge for the Islands is to retain young people on the islands. Addressing this challenge will require an intensive approach from the government to improve access to the islands, increase employment opportunities and guarantee the provision of basic social services.**
- ✦ **In terms of the provision of health, welfare, employment and education, access remains the single biggest issue for island communities.**
- ✦ **As traditional sectors of employment such as fishing have significantly declined, it may be necessary to encourage new enterprises through tax incentives.**
- ✦ **Island populations and demographics often do not provide the critical mass looked for by funding agencies when assessing applications for childcare. Pooling resources with other communities may be necessary to ensure that childcare is delivered to the islands.**
- ✦ **The lack of choice in school subjects presents real challenges for island schools in retaining pupil numbers. To address this it may be necessary for the Department of Education to devise a policy of sending teachers to islands on a weekly or fortnightly basis.**

10.1 Overview of the Islands

There are 33 inhabited islands with a combined population of 2,945, which are found along the coast from Rathlin in Co. Antrim, through Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Galway and Cork. Under the current NDP 2007-2013 the Government has committed to spending €126 million to sustain the communities.

In spite of increases in public expenditure and improvements to infrastructure, the population of the Islands continues to decline. The greatest single challenge for the islands is to retain young people on the islands. This will require an intensive approach from the government to improve access to the

islands, increase employment opportunities and guarantee the provision of basic social services. The fishing industry has traditionally acted as the main employer and as the primary source of income. However, like all fishing communities in Ireland, the Islands have seen a sharp decline in the industry. Notwithstanding this, island identity is synonymous with fishing, and despite the decline in the fishing industry, it continues to act as a source of income and forms an important part of the economy. Tourism has become a greater source of income to many islands during the summer months. However, the problem with this sector is its seasonal nature, which leaves islanders with few employment opportunities during winter.

The Rapporteur recommends that

- ✦ **the Government brings forward a Charter of Rights, based on the needs of the individual islands, which would be guaranteed in law. These rights would form the basis of a strategy to re-populate the islands and encourage young people to stay. The charter would include the right to access the islands through proper piers and airstrips, with targets and timescales and the right to essential social services.**
- ✦ **a specific job creation strategy with targets and timescales should be drafted by Údarás na Gaeltachta based on the needs of each island.**

10.2 Infrastructure

The most important issues for island communities are access and infrastructure. To ensure that islands remain connected to their mainland continued investment is necessary in a number of key areas.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **that continued investment in infrastructure such as airstrips, piers and helipads is maintained to ensure the quality of infrastructure;**
- ✦ **that video conference technology should be rolled out to all islands along with a programme of initiatives for enterprise and services to maximise the use of video conferencing;**

- ✦ **there should be proper policy development to ensure that when awarding ferry service contracts the social and economic needs of the island people such as commuting to work and accessing services will be met by the ferry services.**

10.3 Agriculture and Fishing

Farming is crucial to the islands in sustaining communities and for the environment. While farmers must rely on other sources of income it continues to be important as there are fewer forms of alternative employment on the islands. Sustaining farming is difficult as there are also greater costs in transporting animals and veterinary care is far more expensive.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **that islanders should be encouraged to get involved in agri-tourism and to produce organic agricultural products through an agri-tourism island programme;**
- ✦ **that investment in infrastructure should also be directed at fishing and provision should be made for suitable piers and harbours, cold storage, ice and basic processing;**
- ✦ **that island cooperatives and development companies should be facilitated in buying fishing licences and/or polyvalent ‘tonnage’ which could be leased out to island fishermen who wish to enter the industry or to expand their fishing operations. Tonnage which comes up for sale should be restricted for sale on islands. Foreshore licences should, when not being used, be banked for purchase or use by other islanders in the future;**
- ✦ **that island cooperatives and development companies should be facilitated in applying for licences for aquaculture.**

10.4 Enterprise Development

With the challenges facing traditional sectors of employment, the development of enterprise is the most effective way of ensuring the long term sustainability of the islands. There are a number of initiatives which can be taken to foster enterprise on the islands:

- ✦ **there should also be a specific job creation strategy from Údarás na Gaeltachta based on the needs of each island.**
- ✦ **university and government departments should draft a policy to begin outsourcing administrative work to the islands;**
- ✦ **island co-ops/development companies should be supported in developing profiles of their islands with information on services, demographics, skills etc. which would be useful for potential employers/employees and entrepreneurs.**

10.5 Education

Childcare needs to become a key element of island policy due to the changing nature of island society. Island populations and demographics often do not provide the critical mass looked for by funding agencies when assessing applications for childcare. In order to address this, child care funded projects could be granted along with other projects, which would pool material and human resources together.

Similarly to small rural areas, island schools suffer from inadequate teaching and administrative support. The lack of choice in school subjects presents real challenges for island schools in retaining pupil numbers. To ensure a minimum standard in every school it is therefore necessary to have a minimum of two full time teachers in attendance in all island schools. Furthermore, the Department of Education should devise a policy of sending teachers to islands on a weekly or fortnightly basis to teach certain key second level subjects. Another measure which is currently in use in isolated parts of Sweden, is teaching through video conferencing. Both measures should be reviewed as a matter of priority.

To ensure that Gaeltacht schools continue to avail of modern educational services such schools should have guaranteed access to psychologist and speech therapists who are fluent in Irish. The system of providing scholarships to students to attend island schools in Gaeltacht areas should be developed and expanded.

The Rapporteur recommends that legislation should be put in place relating specifically to educational rights for island communities, which would ensure that the following measures would come into force in island communities:

- ✦ island children should have access to preschool education for 1 year prior to entering the mainstream education system;
- ✦ all schools should have a minimum of 2 full time teachers or one teacher and one full time assistant;
- ✦ educational psychologists and speech therapists should be given training to acquire sufficient fluency in Irish to provide services on Gaeltacht islands;
- ✦ a full range of second level subjects should be taught at island schools either through sending teachers to islands on a part-time basis or through video conferencing.

10.6 Health and Social Services

An accessible health service is crucial in maintaining island communities and also in attracting new people to come to live among them. Because of isolation, patients and in particular elderly patients rely on visits of health professionals.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ island women should be given greater choice in maternity care, including visits to the island from midwives. The right of access to midwives should be guaranteed by the HSE;
- ✦ that ancillary services such as chiropody should be provided at regular intervals;
- ✦ that health services personnel visiting Gaeltacht areas be offered training in Irish to help them become fluent.

Caibidil 11: An Ghaeltacht

Eochairtheachtaireachtaí

- ✦ De réir sonraí a thiomsaigh Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta na hÉireann, níl ach aon cheathrú de theaghlaigh i gceantair Ghaeltachta le Gaeilge líofa acu.
- ✦ Téann 46% de leanaí atá ar aois scoile i gceantair Ghaeltachta ar scoil gan aon líofacht sa Ghaeilge acu.
- ✦ Tá cainteoirí Gaeilge ag taisteal ón nGaeltacht amach le teacht ar obair agus ar sheirbhísí atá lonnaithe i mbailte lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht. Tá tionchar dochrach ag an easpa fostaíochta agus seirbhísí sa Ghaeltacht ar thimpeallacht shochtheangeolaíoch na gceantar Gaeltachta.
- ✦ Is é ceannas an Bhéarla, go príomha, i gcóras an oideachais agus na méán sa Ghaeltacht is cúis imeallú na Gaeilge laistigh de ghréasáin shóisialta.
- ✦ Sa bhliain 2007 chaill cuideachtaí cuidithe ag Údarás na Gaeltachta post amháin as gach ochtar
- ✦ Má táthar chun ceantair Ghaeltachta a chothabháil ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar phríomhtheanga iontu agus má táthar chun ceantair Ghaeltachta atá anois dátheangach nó a bhfuil an Béarla i réim iontu a athbheochan, ní mór meicníochtaí reachtúla a bheith ann chun idirdhealú a dhéanamh idir ceantair Ghaeltachta agus chun pleanáil teanga a fhorbairt bunaithe ar riachtanais dhifriúla theangeolaíocha na gceantar Gaeltachta.

11.1 Déimeagrafaic

Den chuid is mó tá ceantair Ghaeltachta suite i Réigiún Chósta an Iarthair ina bhfuil pobail Ghaeltachta lonnaithe i gContaetha Dhún na nGall, Mhaigh Eo, na Gaillimhe, Chiarraí agus Chorcaí. Is i gContae na Gaillimhe atá an daonra is mó Gaeltachta ina bhfuil 40,052 duine, arb é sin 47% de dhaonra iomlán na Gaeltachta agus 26% de mhórchríoch iomlán na Gaeltachta. D'fhéadfaí an líon sin bheith míthreorach ar bhealach mar tá 12,000 as daonra Ghaeltacht na Gaillimhe i mbuachbailte chathair na Gaillimhe.

11.2 Forbhreathnú Sochtheangeolaíoch

De réir sonraí a thiomsaigh Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta na hÉireann, níl ach aon cheathrú de theaghlaigh i gceantair Ghaeltachta le Gaeilge líofa acu. Chuir an t-údar a rinne anailís ar an suirbhé, Donncha Ó hÉallaithe, síos ar an mbeartas Gaeilge a lean gach rialtas Éireannach i ndiaidh a chéile mar 'thubaiste amach is amach'⁹⁵.

Threisigh an staideár is déanaí ar úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht, dar teideal Comprehensive Study on the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht má thiteann céatadán na nGaeilgeoirí faoi 67%, i bpobal Gaeltachta, ní bheidh úsáid na Gaeilge, mar theanga phobail agus teaghlaigh, inbhuanaithe.

Cláraíonn an Tuarascáil an fhianaise curtha i láthair ag Ó Giollagáin (2002) agus Mac Donncha (2005) a mhaíonn go dtiomnaíonn dinimic shóisialta an ghluaiseacht ó Ghaeilge go Béarla. Is iad na fachtóirí a imríonn tionchar ar an aistriú go Béarla ná gaireacht na gCeantar Gaeltachta do cheantair uirbeacha, a fhágann gur tarraingtí iad do Bhéarlóirí chun cónaí a dhéanamh ann mar aon le tarraingteacht na nGaeltachtaí mar chinn scríbe do thurasóirí. Ar an gcúis sin tá níos mó Béarlóirí ag teacht chun cónaí i nGaeltachtaí, agus tá roinnt iarmhairtí leis.

Maidir leis an gcóras oideachais, maíonn an Tuarascáil go bhfuil 46% de leanaí a thosaíonn ar scoil gan líofacht ar bith sa teanga⁹⁶. Is é an fáth atá leis an líon sin gur rugadh nó gur tógadh aon cheathrú de dhaltaí a théann ar scoil sa Ghaeltacht lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht agus gur tógadh le Béarla sa Ghaeltacht daltaí eile a théann ar scoil ansin.

Threisigh tionchar na treochta úsáid an Bhéarla i measc cainteoirí óga Gaeilge ó dhúchas. Cé go bhfágann Béarlóirí an scoil le scileanna maithe cumarsáide sa Ghaeilge, is é an Béarla an teanga i gceannas i measc daltaí scoile⁹⁷. Is é conclúid na Tuarascála go bhfuil athrú radacach beartais ag teastáil chun na himpleachtaí diúltacha teanga a bhaineann le gluaiseachtaí déimeagrafacha a bhainistiú.

⁹⁵ The Irish Times (6 Eanáir, 2002),

⁹⁶ Leathanach 15

⁹⁷ Mac Donnchadh

Is é is cúis le himeallú na Gaeilge laistigh de ghréasáin shóisialta ná an Béarla a bheith i gceannas sa chóras Oideachais Gaeltachta agus sna meáin. Is é an chonclúid a bhí ar shuirbhé a rinneadh sa Tuarascáil Shochtheangeolaíoch ná mura mbíonn mórathrú ar phatrúin teanga, ní cosúil go mbeidh an Ghaeilge ina príomhtheanga pobail nó teaghlaigh i gcionn idir cúig bliana déag agus fiche bliain sna ceantair Ghaeltachta is láidre. Éireoidh ceantair Ghaeltachta Chatagóir A (na ceantair Ghaeltachta atá fágtha le daonraí cainteoirí Gaeilge thar 67%) ina bpobail teangabhunaithe atá ag brath ar ghréasáin shóisialta seachas pobal a bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar phríomhtheanga pobail ann, agus ina mbeidh mionlach teaghlach ag tógáil a gclann le Gaeilge agus ina mbeidh an teanga ag brath go príomha ar fhorais oideachais agus phobail.

Is é atá molta ag an gComhchoiste:

- ✦ go dtacófaí leis an dtogra chun An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta a bhunú mar chomhlacht reachtúil, is féidir leis an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta, mar sin, gach breathnú beartais a bhaineann le gach gné den chóras oideachais Gaeltachta a tharmligeann chuig an gcomhlacht reachtúil seo,
- ✦ go dtacófaí le scoileanna sealbhaithe teanga a bhunú i gceantair Ghaeltachta Chatagóir A do pháistí nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Chuirfeadh an scéim seo seirbhísí ar fáil idir bhunoideachas agus iarbhuideochais a chuirfeadh ar chumas leanaí go leor líofachta a bheith acu le go mbeidís páirteach in oideachas Gaeilge;
- ✦ go nglacfaí le moladh le haghaidh beartas iontrála chuig bunscoileanna Gaeltachta lena chinntiú nach mór do leanaí bheith in ann Gaeilge a labhairt le gur féidir iontráil a fháil. Moltar gur chóir go mbeadh an iontráil teoranta dóibh siúd a thagann ó theaghlaigh le Gaeilge agus do leanaí a d'fhreastail ar bhunscoileanna Gaeilge;
- ✦ gur chóir meicníocht reachtúil a sholáthar chun idirdhealú idir cineálacha difriúla pobail Ghaeltachta atá ann laistigh de theorainneacha reachtúla Gaeltachta;
- ✦ gur chóir íoschritéir shainmhínithe a bheith ann chun stádas reachtúil Gaeltachta a bhronnadh;
- ✦ gur chóir míniú ar an dtéarma 'Gaeltacht' atá sainmhínithe i gcomhthéacs an Achta mar 'limistéir shainithe phleanála teanga' a shoiléiriú, seachas ciall an fhocail 'Gaeltacht' a d'fheadfaí bheith léi mar atá

sa teangeolaíoch nó sa ghnáthchaint;

- ✦ gur chóir príomhról an Aire agus na Roinne Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta, thar ceann an Stáit, a athdheimhniú mar ról atá freagrach as leas cultúrtha, sóisialta, eacnamaíoch, bonneagair agus oideachais na Gaeltachta;
- ✦ gur chóir gach plean agus foráil reachtúil a imeascadh i bpróiseas pleanála atá cuimsitheach agus comhtháite ina mbeadh pleanáil teanga, pleanáil áitiúil agus fhisiceach, pleanáil oideachais, pleanáil struchtúrach agus pleanáil shóisialta agus seirbhísí tacaíocht teaghlaigh san áireamh;
- ✦ gur chóir pleananna ceantair áitiúil a bhforáiltear dóibh faoi reachtaíocht phleanála a fhorbairt laistigh den chéad 12 mhí eile do gach ceantar Gaeltachta. Ba chóir na pleananna sin a dhréachtú i gcomhairle na saineolaithe sochtheangeolaíocha agus ionadaithe áitiúla lena chinntiú go bhfuil an Ghaeilge cosanta mar theanga phobail.

11.3 An Geilleagar

Tá roinnt dúshlán roimh cheantar na Gaeltachta chun a ngeilleagair áitiúla a inbhuanú. Sa bhliain 2007 chruthaigh cuideachtaí cuidithe ag Údarás 1038 post agus san am céanna cailleadh 964 post. Ar an gcaoi chéanna leis an gcuid eile den tír, bhí méadú tagtha ar sheirbhísí agus san am céanna leanadh den mheath i ndéantúsaíocht thraidisiúnta. Bhí borradh faoi thionscail ardteicneolaíochta i gceantair Ghaeltachta amhail na hearnálacha cógaisíochta, bithleighis agus feistí leighis.

Tá ról ríthábhachtach go fóill ag an earnáil mhara i ngeilleagair áitiúla i mórán ceantair Ghaeltachta. Déantar feirmeoireacht bhradáin den chuid is mó in earnáil mhara na gceantar Gaeltachta a bhfuil tairgeadh de bhreis agus 3,000 tonna san iomlán ann. Bhí fostaíocht ann le próiseáil éisc i réigiúin na Gaeltachta tráth, ach ó tharla laghdú ar stoic éisc, áfach, ba é an tionscal sin go háirithe a bhí thíos leis.

11.4 Tionscal Teanga agus Oideachas

Tá fíoracmhainn sa Ghaeltacht chun a geilleagair a fhorbairt tríd an nGaeilge. Tá trí shraith ann i dtionscal na teanga: oiliúint teanga, aistriúchán agus ateangaireacht, agus teicneolaíochtaí teanga. Trí na trí shraith seo a chur chun cinn trí roinnt tionscnamh, thiocfadh le ceantair Ghaeltachtaí a geilleagair a fhás agus san am céanna Gaeilge a chur chun cinn agus Gaeilge a inbhuanú.

11.5 Oiliúint Teanga

Is é Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge an t-aon teastas deimhnithe ar fáil dóibh siúd atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Ó bunaíodh an Teastas, bunaíodh 31 aonad teanga sa Ghaeltacht. Sa bhliain 2006, d'fhreastal breis agus 1,200 aosach ar chúrsaí Gaeilge a bhí maoinithe fud fad na Gaeltachta: ba rannpháirtithe iad 80% de na mic léinn i gcúrsaí Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge.

Is gá TEG a chur chun cinn a thuilleadh chun aonaid teanga i gceantair Ghaeltachta a fhorbairt. Is féidir sin a dhéanamh trí thacaíocht a thabhairt do fheachtais feasachta i ngach contae ar bhord farraige an lathair chun líon deiseanna oibre a léiriú trí cháilíochtaí teanga bheith ar fáil.

Tá 500 mac léinn ag freastal ar chúrsaí lánaimseartha agus páirtaimseartha idir dioplóma, ard-dioplómaí, céimeanna agus iarchéimeanna sa bhliain acadúil 2007/2008. Bhunaigh Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh, ionaid fhor-rochtana ar an gCeathrú Rua, i gCarna agus i nGaoth Dobhair.

Tá roinnt deiseanna ann chun cúrsaí máistreachta i bPleanáil agus Beartas Teanga, bainistíocht gnó, riarachán i nGaeilge agus ealaíona agus cumarsáid a lonnú i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Leis an tiomaint in oideachas ceathrú leibhéal tá sé tábhachtach go bhfaighidh ceantair Ghaeltachta infheistíocht chaipitil i mbonneagar taighde. Is féidir institiúid taighde a fhorbairt, trí acmhainní nádúrtha na Gaeltachta a úsáid, a dhíreodh ar shochtheangaolaíocht sna eolaíochtaí sóisialta agus réimsí amhail bitheolaíocht nó an comhshaol sna eolaíochtaí crua. Is é an buntáiste a bheadh le hinstitiúid taighde sa ghearrthréimhse ná mic léinn ardleibhéil iarchéime agus san fhadtréimhse, infheistíocht isteach a mhealladh.

Is é a mholann an Comhchoiste:

- ♦ **go mbunófaí ionad taighde don iardheisceart, don iarthar agus don iarthuaisceart a thabharfadh creidiúnú do mhic léinn iarchéime ag baint le taighde dochtúireachta;**
- ♦ **go mbunófaí sainaonad Oideachais Tríú Leibhéal maidir le Léann sochtheangeolaíoch agus phleanála teanga na Gaeilge, teagasc agus taighde san áireamh, le hacmhainní cuí agus maoinithe ag an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas.**

Le fás an Léinn Éireannaigh agus an Léinn Cheiltigh in ollscoileanna fud fad Mheiriceá Thuaidh, tá deis ann chun institiúidí aosfhoghlaime i gceantair Ghaeltachta a chur chun cinn. Is féidir sin a dhéanamh trí shuirbhé a dhéanamh ar na cineálacha cúrsaí atá ar fáil i ndámha fud fad Mheiriceá Thuaidh agus san Eoraip agus trí thógáil chomhpháirtíochta a mhéadú idir ollscoileanna Éireannacha, ollscoileanna thar lear agus institiúidí aosfhoghlaime i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Ina theannta sin, ba chóir tús a chur le feachtas cothaithe a thionscnamh trí ollscoileanna na hEorpa agus Mheiriceá Thuaidh agus trí ghrúpaí oidhreachtach chun institiúidí foghlama amhail Oideas Gael a chur chun cinn.

11.6 Aistriúchán, Ateangaireacht agus Teicneolaíocht

Ó rinne an tAontas Eorpach teanga oifigiúil den Ghaeilge, tá borradh mór faoin ráchairt ar aistritheoirí agus ateangairí. Ba chóir seirbhísí aistriúcháin a spreagadh le bheith lonnaithe i gceantair Ghaeltachta trí dhreasachtaí cánach. Is féidir seirbhísí aistriúcháin a chur chun cinn trí ranna ollscoile a nascadh le cuideachtaí seirbhísí aistriúcháin. Trí ranna agus cúrsaí ollscoile a mhéadú bheadh acmhainní daonna cuí ag cuideachtaí aistriúcháin chun a bhfiontair a dhéanamh inbhuanaithe.

Cé gur mór an dul chun cinn atá déanta chun cúrsaí tríú leibhéal i gceantair Ghaeltachta a fhorbairt, is iomaí deis le haghaidh fáis atá ann go fóill. Agus an t-éileamh ann d'aistritheoirí agus ateangairí tá sé le ciall ard-dioplómaí agus cláir mháistreachta sna hábhair seo a lonnú sa Ghaeltacht. Tá cláir mháistreachta san aistriúchán agus clár teangeolaíoch dlíodóra AE ann i nGaillimh agus i mBaile Átha Cliath. Níl ann do chúrsa máistreachta in ateangaireacht d'ateangairí Gaeilge ach i Londain. Tá cás láidir ann ach go háirithe ar son cúrsa máistreachta a lonnú i nGaeltacht láidir sa dóigh gur féidir le mic léinn tumadh níos iomláine i bhfuaimeanna na teanga a fháil.

Tá deis ann, le seirbhísí aistriúcháin agus ateangaireachta a lonnú ann, chun roinnt torthaí i dteicneolaíocht na teanga a fhiosrú. Tá roinnt táirgí i dteicneolaíochtaí teanga a d'fhéadfadh ceantair Ghaeltachta tús a chur lena dtáirgeadh amhail uirlisí aistriúcháin innill agus uirlisí cuidithe aistriúcháin, próiseáil téacs ilteangaigh agus bainistíocht inneachair; próiseáil urlabhra lena n-áirítear aithint gutha, bithmhéadracht urlabhra agus téacs-le-téacs; bainistíocht faisnéise téacs lean n-áirítear bainistíocht caidreamh custaiméara agus córais chuidithe éisteachta

agus urlabhra. Le gur féidir sin a bhaint amach, bheadh gá le comhpháirtíocht a chothú le ceann de na hInstitiúidí Teicneolaíochta agus roinn a bhunú a dhéanadh infheistíocht i dtaighde amhail teicneolaíochtaí.

Is é a mholann an Comhchoiste:

- ✦ gur chóir athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar chúrsaí aistriúcháin amhail teangeolaíocht dlíodóra agus máistreacht san ateangaireacht agus é mar sprioc ann cúrsaí a lonnú i gceantair Ghaeltachta;
- ✦ gur chóir conaisc ardluais leathanbhanda a thabhairt chuig na seacht suíomh Gaeltachta ina bhfuil ionaid fhor-rochtana ag Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge;
- ✦ gur chóir cúrsaí nua máistreachta i bPleanáil agus Beartas Teanga, bainistíocht gnó, riarachán i nGaeilge, ealaíona agus cumarsáid, a lonnú i gceantair Ghaeltachta;
- ✦ go mbunófaí tionscnamh Uile-Éireannach chun páirtíochtaí idir institiúidí tríú leibhéal a chothú agus an Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta a bhfuil sé mar aidhm aige reanna a lonnú agus a mhéadú i gceantair ghaeltachta agus cúrsaí a chur ar fáil le freastal ar riachtanais an réigiúin;
- ✦ athbhreithniú Institiúid Ardoideachais ar an gcruthú comhpháirtíochta idir ceantar Gaeltachta agus Institiúid Teicneolaíochta chun taighde a dhéanamh ar fhorbairt agus ar tháirgeadh teicneolaíochtaí teanga agus aistriúcháin.

agus ní gan chúis. B'fhearr i bhfad cur chuige níos cuimsithí i leith na turasóireacht a thabhairt.

Is é a mholann an Comhchoiste:

- ✦ gur chóir go mbeadh comhoibriú feabhsaithe ann idir soláthróirí turasóireachta cultúrtha agus soláthróirí tráchtála sa Ghaeltacht, ar féidir é a bhaint amach trí fhóiraim áitiúla;
- ✦ gur chóir go mbeadh féilire d'ócáidí agus féilte Gaeltachta ann chun lucht turasóireachta a chur ar an eolas faoi na nithe atá ag tarlú le linn na bliana;
- ✦ gur chóir gníomhaíochtaí cultúrtha amhail féilte agus turais a charnadh i bpacáistí Gaeltachta;
- ✦ gur chóir díriú ar ghrúpaí turas oideachasúil le haghaidh pacáistí amhail turas ar na Gaeltachtaí;
- ✦ siamsaíocht oíche, ticéid agus pacáistí do cheolchoirmeacha agus d'imeachtaí i gceantair Ghaeltachta;
- ✦ ceangail áitiúla idir oibritheoir agus ceoltoirí don tsiamsaíocht oíche do lucht éisteachta nach dtéann chuig tithe tábhairne.

11.7 Turasóireacht Chultúrtha

Meastar gur fiú €5.1 billiún sa bhliain an turasóireacht cultúrtha do gheilleagar na hÉireann⁹⁸. Is ábhar margaidh é na ceantair Ghaeltachta a bhfuil líon láidir cainteoirí Gaeilge ann go fóill an turasóireacht cultúrtha a bhfuil an Ghaeltacht go hiomlán fóirsteanach di. Tá roinnt clár ag Údarás na Gaeltachta le tacú le turasóireacht i gceantair Ghaeltachta amhail pacáistí margaióchta, tacaíocht le féilte áitiúla agus infheistíocht i mórthionscadail chaipitil. In Athbhreithniú Turasóireachta Cultúrtha Bhord Fáilte tugadh chun solais an easpa comhordaithe idir soláthróirí Turasóireachta Cultúrtha agus soláthróirí tráchtála táirgí agus seirbhísí coimhdeacha – m.sh. lóistín, bia, deochanna, srl. Is minic gur deacair le turasóirí a dturais a phleanáil nó a eagrú nó taighde a dhéanamh orthu

98 Straitéis Nua Turasóireachta Cultúrtha in Éirinn Ich.5

Chapter 11 An Ghaeltacht

Key Messages

- ✦ According to data compiled by the Irish Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, only one quarter of households in Gaeltacht areas possess fluency in Irish.
- ✦ 46% of school-going children in Gaeltacht areas are starting school without any fluency in Irish.
- ✦ The marginalisation of Irish within social networks is driven mostly by the dominance of English in the Gaeltacht education system and media.
- ✦ Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas are commuting to towns located outside the Gaeltacht for work and to access services. The lack of employment and services in the Gaeltacht is adversely affecting the socio-linguistic environment of Gaeltacht areas.
- ✦ In 2007, one in eight jobs were lost in Údrarás na Gaeltachta assisted companies.
- ✦ To sustain Gaeltacht areas where Irish is the predominant language and to revive Gaeltacht areas which have become bilingual or where English is the ascendancy, there must be statutory mechanisms to distinguish between Gaeltacht areas and to facilitate the development of language planning based on the different linguistic needs of Gaeltacht areas.

11.1 Demographics

Gaeltacht areas are for the most part found in the Western Coastal Region with counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Cork sustaining Gaeltacht populations. Galway has the largest Gaeltacht population amounting to 40,052 people, which is 47% of the entire Gaeltacht population and 26% of the entire land mass of the Gaeltacht. This figure may be somewhat misleading as 12,000 of the Galway Gaeltacht population are located in Galway city suburbs.

11.2 Socio-Linguistic Overview

According to data compiled by the Irish Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, only one quarter of households in Gaeltacht areas possess fluency in Irish. The author of the survey, Donncha Ó hÉallaithe, described the Irish language policy followed by successive Irish governments a 'complete and absolute disaster'⁹⁹.

The most recent linguistic study on the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht entitled 'Comprehensive Study on the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht' has emphasised that if the proportion of Gaeltacht speakers falls below 67% the use of Irish as a community and family language becomes unsustainable.

The Report documents evidence presented by Ó Giollagáin (2002) and Mac Donncha (2005) who argue that the movement from Irish to English is being driven by social dynamics. Factors influencing the shift towards English are the proximity of Gaeltacht areas to urban centres, which makes them more attractive for English speakers to settle in as well as the attractiveness of Gaeltacht areas as tourist destinations. For this reason there are more English speakers coming to settle in Gaeltachts, which has had a number of consequences.

In terms of the education system, the Report states that 46% of school-going children in Gaeltacht areas are starting school without any fluency in the language¹⁰⁰. What accounts for this number is that one quarter of school goers in the Gaeltacht are born or were raised outside of the Gaeltacht while other school-goers raised in the Gaeltacht are raised through English.

The effect of this trend has reinforced the use of English among young native speakers. While English speakers are leaving school with good communication skills in Irish, the dominant language amongst school goers is English¹⁰¹. The Report concludes that a radical change in policy is necessary to manage the negative linguistic implications of demographic movements.

The marginalisation of Irish within social networks is driven mostly by the dominance of English in the Gaeltacht education

99 The Irish Times (January 6, 2002),

100 P15

101 Mac Donnchadh

system and media. The conclusion of a survey carried out in the Socio-Linguistic Report stated that without a major change in language patterns, Irish is unlikely to remain the predominant community and family language for more than fifteen to twenty years in the strongest Gaeltacht areas. Category A Gaeltacht districts (the remaining Gaeltacht areas with Irish speaking populations above 67%) will become language based communities based on social networks as opposed to a language in which Irish is the main community language, with a minority of families raising their children through Irish and the language being primarily based on educational and community institutions.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **supporting the proposal to establish An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta as a statutory body, the Department of Education and Science could then delegate all policy considerations related to every aspect of the Gaeltacht education system to this statutory body.**
- ✦ **supporting the establishment of language acquisition schools in Category A Gaeltacht districts for children who do not speak Irish. This scheme would provide services from primary to post-primary education to enable children to acquire a sufficient fluency in Irish to participate in Irish language education.**
- ✦ **adopting the proposal for an entry policy to Gaeltacht primary schools to ensure that children must be able to speak Irish in order to gain entry. For secondary schools it is proposed that entry should be limited to those who come from Irish speaking families and children who have come through Irish language primary schools.**
- ✦ **a statutory mechanism should be provided to differentiate between the different types of Gaeltacht communities which exist within the statutory Gaeltacht boundaries;**
- ✦ **that there should be a defined minimum criteria for the awarding of statutory Gaeltacht status;**
- ✦ **that the statutory definition of the term ‘Gaeltacht’ in the context of the Act as ‘limistéir shainithe phleanála teanga’ [designated language planning districts] should be clarified, as distinct from any other linguistic or colloquial meaning the word Gaeltacht might otherwise have;**
- ✦ **that the primary role of the Minister and of the**

Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, on behalf of the State, should be reaffirmed as responsible for cultural, social, economic, infrastructure and educational interests of the Gaeltacht;

- ✦ **that all plans and statutory provisions should be integrated into a comprehensive and cohesive planning process which would include language planning, local and physical planning, education planning, structural planning and social planning including family support services;**
- ✦ **that local area plans provided for under planning legislation should be developed within the next 12 months for all Gaeltacht areas. Such plans should be drafted in consultation with socio-linguistic experts and local representatives to ensure the Irish language is protected as a community language.**

11.3 The Economy

The Gaeltacht area faces a number challenges to sustain their local economies. In 2007 one in eight jobs were lost in Údarás na Gaeltachta assisted firms. Similarly to the rest of the country, Gaeltacht areas have experienced increases in services while traditional manufacturing has continued to decline. High tech industries such as pharmaceutical, biomedical and medical devices sectors have grown in Gaeltacht areas.

The marine sector continues to play a vital role in the local economies of many of many Gaeltacht areas. Salmon is mostly farmed in the marine sector of Gaeltacht areas with a total production of more than 3,000 tonnes. Fish processing had been an area of employment in Gaeltacht regions, however, with the reduction of fish stocks the industry has suffered particularly.

11.4 Language Industry and Education

There exists real potential for the Gaeltacht to develop its economy through the Irish language. There are three strands to language industry: language training, translation and interpretation, and language technologies. By promoting the three areas through a number of initiatives, the Gaeltacht areas could grow their economies while promoting Irish and sustaining the Irish language.

11.5 Language Training

The European Irish Language Certificate is the only accredited certificate available to those learning Irish. Since the Certificate was established, 31 language units have been established in the Gaeltacht. In 2006, over 1,200 adults attended Irish courses funded throughout the Gaeltacht: 80% of the students were participants in European Irish Language Certificate courses. Further promotion of the EILC is necessary to continue to develop language units in Gaeltacht areas. This could be achieved by supporting awareness campaigns in every county around the Western seaboard to demonstrate the number of job opportunities accessible to those having language qualifications.

There are 500 students attending full-time and part-time courses - including diplomas, higher diplomas, degrees and post-graduate degrees in the 2007/2008 academic year. Academy na hOllscoilaíocht Gaeilge of the National University of Ireland, Galway has established outreach centres in An Cheathrú Rua, Carna and Gaoth Dobhair.

There are a number of opportunities for the creation of new masters courses in Language Planning and Policy, business management, administration in Irish, arts and communications in Gaeltacht areas. With the drive in fourth level education it is important that Gaeltachts areas receive capital investment in research infrastructure. Using the Gaeltacht's natural resources, a research institution could be developed, which could focus on socio-linguistics in the social sciences and in areas such as biology or the environment in the hard sciences. The benefit of a research institution in the short term would be to attract high level post-graduate students and in longer term inward investment.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ♦ **the establishment of a third-level research centre for the south-west, west and north-west;**
- ♦ **the establishment of a dedicated Third Level Education Unit for Irish Language sociolinguistic studies and language planning, including teaching and research, with appropriate resources and funded by the Higher Education Authority.**

With the growth of Irish Studies and Celtic Studies in universities across North America and Europe, there is an opportunity to promote adult learning institutions in Gaeltacht areas. This could be achieved by surveying the types of courses offered in faculties across North America and Europe

by increasing partnership building between Irish universities, universities abroad and adult learning institutions in Gaeltacht areas. Furthermore, a promotional campaign should be initiated in European and North American universities and heritage groups to promote adult learning institutions such as Oideas Gael.

11.6 Translation and Interpretation and Technology

Since Irish became an official language of the European Union, there has been growing demand for translators and interpreters. The establishment of translation services should be encouraged in Gaeltacht areas through tax incentives. The promotion of translation services could also be achieved by linking university departments with translation companies. Through expanding university departments and courses, translation companies would have the necessary human resource to make their enterprises sustainable.

While there has been much progress in developing third level courses in Gaeltacht areas, there still exists many opportunities for growth. With the demand for translators and interpreters it seems logical that higher diplomas and masters programmes in these areas should be located in the Gaeltacht. Masters' programmes in translation and the EU lawyer linguist programme are operating in Galway and Dublin. The only master's course in interpretation for Irish language interpreters is found in London. For interpretation in particular there is a strong case for establishing a master's course in a strong Irish speaking Gaeltacht area so that students could be more fully immersed in the sounds of the language.

With the establishment of translation and interpretation, there is an opportunity to explore a number of spin-offs in language technology. There are a number of products in language technologies which Gaeltacht areas could begin to manufacture such as machine translation and translation-assistance tools, multilingual text processing and content management, speech processing including voice recognition, speech biometrics and text-to-speech, text information management including customer relationship management and hearing and speech-assistance systems. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary to form a partnership with one of the Institutes of Technology and establish a department which would invest in research into such technologies.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ translation courses such as the EU lawyer linguist programme and masters' in interpretation courses should be reviewed with the goal of establishing courses in Gaeltacht areas;
- ✦ high speed broadband connections should be brought to the seven Gaeltacht sites where Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge have outreach centres;
- ✦ the creation of new masters' courses in Language Planning and Policy, business management, administration in Irish, arts and communications in Gaeltacht areas;
- ✦ the establishment of an all-Ireland initiative to promote partnerships between third level institutions and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with the objective of locating and expanding departments in the Gaeltacht areas and providing courses to meet the needs of the region;
- ✦ a Higher Education Institute review into the creation of a joint partnership between a Gaeltacht area and an Institute of Technology to research the development and production of language and translation technologies.

The Rapporteur recommends

- ✦ there should be enhanced cooperation between Gaeltacht cultural tourism providers and commercial providers, which could be achieved through forums at local level;
- ✦ there should be a calendar of Gaeltacht events and festivities to inform tourists of what is happening throughout the year;
- ✦ cultural activities such as festivals and tours should be bundled into Gaeltacht packages;
- ✦ educational tour groups should be targeted for packages such as a tour of the Gaeltachtaí;
- ✦ evening entertainment, tickets and packages for concerts and events held in Gaeltacht areas;
- ✦ local mnetworking between tour operators and musicians for nighttime entertainment for a non-pub audience.

11.7 Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is estimated to be worth €5.1 billion annually to the Irish economy¹⁰². In Gaeltacht areas which still have a strong number of Irish speakers cultural tourism is a potential market for which the Gaeltacht is ideally suited. There are a number of programmes to support tourism in Gaeltacht areas by Údarás such as marketing packages, the support of local festivals and investment in major capital projects. In the Bord Fáilte Review of Cultural Tourism the lack of coordination between Cultural Tourism providers and commercial providers of ancillary products and services – e.g. accommodation, food, drink, etc. – was highlighted. This can often make it unnecessarily difficult for holidaymakers to research, plan and organise their trips. A more packaged approach to tourism is required.

102 Bord Fáilte A New Strategy for Cultural Tourism in Ireland p.5

Chapter 13: Structural Reform

Key Messages

- ✦ **There is poor articulation of spatial dimensions in economic policy, limited regional policy coordination and insufficient consideration of the goals of the national spatial strategy.**
- ✦ **Balanced regional development should be articulated in law, defining the regional and sub regional boundaries and giving one Government Department, preferably the Department of the Environment, overall responsibility for regional development.**
- ✦ **A range of social and economic indicators of regional development should be drawn up and**
- ✦ **used to monitor the output of all government departments.**
- ✦ **Overall the process of centralising vital services is being pursued without any assessment of the effects on the overall social and economic development of the Western seaboard Region.**
- ✦ **The process of closing local hospitals, post offices and Garda stations must be reversed.**
- ✦ **At a local level councils have limited influence over public policy areas such as transport, education, and health. Regional authorities are constrained by a lack of autonomy to initiate investment and to influence economic policy.**

13.1 Government Policies

In terms of actual delivery of projected expenditure, eastern counties continue to be prioritised. Projects such as the National Development Plan and Transport 21 tend to raise expectations about spending but given their broad long term and unspecified nature, the projects are often left incomplete and remain vulnerable to cutbacks. In NDP 2000-2006 actual spending for the BMW region fell short of planned spending in roads, public transport and a number of other areas. In the current Development Plan there is no regional breakdown of planned spending. One solution could be for spending projections to be based on regions such as the Western seaboard region and its sub regions.

Furthermore, the OECD Report highlighted Ireland's current bottom-down approach "whereby departmental/agencies' existing requirements and new policy initiatives are added up to provide an aggregate expenditure number, subject to approval by Cabinet, rather than "top-down" whereby the government establishes an overall aggregate for expenditures which is then allocated among the departments agencies and new policy initiatives. It was concluded that "while on paper there is a medium-term framework, in practice the medium-term perspective is not guiding the budget process, and there is no medium-term fiscal target acting as a main anchor or objective." OECD therefore recommended that there should be medium term budget frameworks with a top-down process that begins by setting the aggregate expenditure ceiling, which is done in countries like the Netherlands and Sweden. If such a framework were adopted, it could be made subject to balanced regional development requirements and therefore ensure a more focused and equitable approach to spending.

The Rapporteur recommends:

- ✦ **Balanced regional development should be articulated in law, defining the regional boundaries and giving one Government Department responsibility for regional development.**
- ✦ **The Department of the Environment should be given overall responsibility for regional development and renamed the Department of the Environment and Regional Development. Its remit would be to advise other departments and agencies on regional policies, to monitor impacts of government policies, to work closely with regional assemblies and authorities and to co-ordinate with the Department of Regional Development in the north.**
- ✦ **The counties of the Western seaboard (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, West Cork and West Limerick) should be treated as a distinct region with sub-regions of North West, West and South West.**
- ✦ **A Regional Development Impact Assessment framework should be established in law to compel all state bodies and departments to assess whether policies being developed would create regional imbalances and to set out what steps could be**

taken to amend such a policies to ensure balanced regional development. The Impact Assessment would be publishable at each stage of the policy process.

- ✦ When a person or group believes that their region will be affected by a state policy, leading to imbalanced regional development, they could complain in the first instance to the policy director of the department in question who would have to respond within one month of the complaint. Any further complaints would be made to the Equality Commission who could initiate an investigation with the full cooperation of the relevant department.
- ✦ Medium term budget frameworks subject to a Regional Development Impact Assessment with aggregate spending figures. These medium term budget frameworks would be made on a top-bottom basis which would set aggregate spending for departments.
- ✦ Forfás and other bodies such as Enterprise Ireland should be given the task of innovation strategies for the regions.
- ✦ A range of social and economic indicators of regional development should be drawn up and used to monitor the output of all government departments¹⁰³.
- ✦ Social and economic data should be collected and published county by county so that plans tailored to the needs of individual regions in terms of job creation, infrastructure and public service delivery can be delivered.
- ✦ A forum on regional development should be established in order to review the data gathered through the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) Monitoring System so as to incorporate the information within the decision making process¹⁰⁴.
- ✦ consideration should be given to the development of a political mandate for regional bodies via direct regional elections to Regional Assemblies and/or Regional Authorities¹⁰⁵.
- ✦ structural funds should be provided directly to the Regional Assemblies and the remaining 'matched funding' should be provided by the exchequer to facilitate the development and roll-out of

value-added regional initiatives and investment programmes¹⁰⁶.

- ✦ regional planning guidelines should be enforced by the Regional Authorities in the context of delivering the NSS goals at regional levels¹⁰⁷.

13.2 Small Gateways and Market Towns

While the reasons for the current imbalance in regional development are complex, it is certainly arguable that the structuring of state institutions and delivery of public policy has contributed to the current inequity between the regions. There is poor articulation of spatial dimensions in economic policy, limited regional policy coordination and insufficient consideration of the goals of the national spatial strategy. As a result of this gateways and hubs identified in the National Spatial Strategy have not experienced any material differences from their new status. Market towns and the broader countryside have also suffered from inadequate attention in the NSS itself and broader national policies.

The Rapporteur recommends that the 1999 White Paper on Rural Development should be reviewed to give a properly articulated role for the economic development of market towns and the wider rural areas.

13.3 Local Services

Public services such as post offices and Garda stations have been allowed to close because of inertia on the part of the Government. The current centralisation of health services has been pursued without any regard to the potential effects on the West. Overall the process of centralising vital services is being led by the state on a pro-active basis in terms of health care or in the case of garda stations and post offices by doing nothing. It appears that state policy ignores the importance of local services to the overall attractiveness of regions for economic development and job creation. At a local level councils have limited influence over public policy areas such as transport, education, and health. Regional authorities are constrained by a lack of autonomy to initiate investment and to influence economic policy. In essence the country continues to suffer from an over centralised state and weak local authorities.

106 As recommended by the BMW Submission to the Green Paper on Local Government Public Consultation
 107 recommended by the BMW Submission to the Green Paper on Local Government Public Consultation.

103 As recommended by the BMW Regional Assembly and Western Development Commission Key Priorities for T16 Review

104 As recommended by the BMW Regional Assembly and Western Development Commission Key Priorities for T16 Review

105 As recommended by the BMW Submission to the Green Paper on Local Government Public Consultation

In order to address this problem there is a need for both local and national reform in the development and delivery of policies designed to address the many disparities and inequities that exist.

APPENDIX 1

Terms of Reference

To study the social and economic needs of the western counties of Ireland, namely, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Clare, West Limerick, West Cork, Kerry in relation to inter alia:

- infrastructure
- public service deficiencies
- impediments to job creation
- potential sectors for development and initiatives
- interventions required to revitalise the region.

APPENDIX 2

Full List of Recommendations

Economy

- ✦ Targeted job creation programmes through the delivery of school building programmes, social housing commitments and capital investment in infrastructural road and rail projects.
- ✦ Regional and sub-regional job creation targets to be set for Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and other Enterprise Support Agencies.
- ✦ Develop a strategy to support retention of local retailers should be introduced including the enhancement of local retail infrastructure, to prevent the drainage of local small and medium retail business to big superstores in city and town centres.
- ✦ Regional strategy should consolidate traditional and modern manufacturing through focusing on upgrading the skills of workers in the industry. Such a strategy could also focus on the potential on attracting new industries and the type of investments necessary to encourage investment.
- ✦ Tourism development agencies should have a clearly defined role in transport policy
- ✦ Investments in tourism product development which recognises the assets of the region are critical e.g. outdoor recreation has potential for counties such as Galway but must be matched by national policies on access to the countryside and clear budgets and programmes that can provide long-term development and not just start-up.
- ✦ Capital assistance for innovative or larger-scale tourism products and investment in cultural products and activities should be encouraged
- ✦ An urgent review should be carried out of the Swansea to Cork ferry service to explore the avenues available to restore the service.
- ✦ Tourism development agencies should have a clearly defined role in transport policy.
- ✦ The examination of the feasibility of creating a combined university of the northwest, which would look into the feasibility of creating a cross-border university institution with economic regeneration as its core aim.

Enterprise

- ✦ Retail planning guidelines should be maintained and strengthened to ensure that superstores are prevented from adversely affecting retail services in market towns.
- ✦ Locally traded service networking programme should maximise the contacts and groups of networks between businesses operating at a local level.
- ✦ Creation of Town Centre Partnerships to focus on retailing, competition, tourism, and unemployment through the cooperation of local public and private sector. These Partnerships can be funded through institutions such as the European Social Fund to roll out through office regeneration projects for town centres. A Best Practice Programme should be developed for town centres which would include training and workshops to develop the capacity of town centres and share expertise.
- ✦ Partnerships should be encouraged between third level institutions and business parks along the lines of that which currently exists between Kerry Technology Park and Tralee IT. Such partnerships should be based on the traditional strengths of the ITs' faculties and have specific criteria for the types of businesses which locate in those business parks.
- ✦ Broader networking between third level institutions and SMEs should be encouraged.
- ✦ Extend placement schemes in companies based in western counties for undergraduates.
- ✦ Expansion of women enterprise networks operating under county enterprise boards. There should be a more comprehensive strategy to promote women in rural enterprise with the goal of connecting and supporting women in rural enterprises and encouraging women to become entrepreneurs in their rural areas. These networks could have the capacity to grant micro-finance start-up funds.
- ✦ Business Points should be established in the Western seaboard counties to ensure that businesses are informed of any development plans for their area through developing a network between local people and businesses. This scheme

would be mirrored along the same lines as the Business Points operating in the Netherlands.

- ✦ County Enterprise Board support schemes should be revised with increased employment grants, stock grants, cashflow support grants, internal efficiency supports, knowledge development supports, and the removal of matching fund requirement.
- ✦ State Financed Loan Guarantee Scheme in conjunction with the European Investment Bank for SMEs operating in the western coastal seaboard with an annual turnover of no greater than €5 million. Under the Scheme 75% of the loan would be guaranteed by the state with a choice of fixed or variable interest rates. The scheme would provide for funds of between €20,000 and €300,000 to be repaid over a period of between two and ten years.
- ✦ Increased support to microfinance institutions with the target of developing offices in the Western seaboard region.
- ✦ A self-sustaining state agency with a property portfolio should be developed for the south-west, north-west, and western counties to promote larger entrepreneurial activity at a local level.
- ✦ Regional FDI target should be set based at Western seaboard regional and sub-regional basis rather than the current NUTS2 regions (BMW and S&E).
- ✦ Western seaboard region review by Forfás of its capacity to attract FDI and the measures which need to be taken at a strategic level to improve its attractiveness.
- ✦ Networking regional policy to be promoted between SMEs and multinational sectors such as internationally traded services.
- ✦ Regional Cluster Policy for the Western seaboard should be developed e.g. for the renewable energy industry, which would target a specific sector and make recommendations on third level and physical infrastructure requirements to promote such clusters. A cluster policy must however, set specific impact assessment criteria in relation to minimum open space requirements, comparability with rural landscape and protection of historic and environmental sites.
- ✦ Investment projects to strengthen the R&D capacity of the ITs with the objective of setting minimum targets for R&D in regions and sub-regions.
- ✦ Specific series of awareness/training seminars to inform manufacturing companies how to manage

product lines (new product development processes, product and customer range management, intellectual property rights and technology transfer). The seminars should include a range of programmes varying from short evening introductory sessions to workshops to detailed training sessions on specific topics and covering the range of topics.

- ✦ Establishment of a Regional Knowledge Initiative to focus on the Western seaboard region.
- ✦ Consideration should be given to implementing recommendations in the recent Freight Transport Report for the Island of Ireland and the Mapping Study of Research and Technology Development Centres on the Island of Ireland Study.
- ✦ Continued and improved support for Intertrade Ireland with a view to expanding its programmes to reach western and south-western counties.
- ✦ Creation of a regional green economy strategy to be drafted by the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources. Such a strategy would mandate enterprise agencies to target investment in the environmental goods sector. The strategy would focus on both encouraging foreign direct investment and promoting small and medium sized environmental goods firms.
- ✦ The Government needs to develop and implement an all-Ireland Economic Development plan to address the deficit of infrastructure and reduce inefficiencies of scale and duplication of services, in particular government agencies.
- ✦ The state should maximise the use of EU funding for cross-border trade and address the need for an all-Ireland research and development (R&D) strategy including extra assistance to small and medium enterprises and new businesses to develop business plans for R&D.
- ✦ Set regional and sub-regional targets for visitor numbers, visitor spending and funding, which could be broken into county targets to encourage tourism.
- ✦ Clear targets for visitor numbers, visitor spending and funding for the north-west, west and south west regions, county targets are also necessary for visitor numbers.
- ✦ Investments in tourism product development which recognises the assets of the region are critical e.g. Outdoor recreation has potential for counties such as Galway but must be matched by government policies on access to the countryside and clear

- budgets and programmes that can provide longterm development and not just start-up
- ✦ capital assistance for innovative or larger-scale tourism products and investment in cultural products and activities should be encouraged.
- ✦ Examine of the feasibility of creating a combined university of the north-west, with economic regeneration as its core aim.

Road, Rail and Air Transportation

- ✦ The publication of Regional Development Impact Assessment by the Department of Transport should be made mandatory where policy for the road and rail network is being initiated
- ✦ The Atlantic Road Corridor, from Waterford to Letterkenny, should be a seamless dual carriageway built under public finance.
- ✦ The Western Rail Corridor should not be subject to cutbacks but proceed as planned. There should be a review of the Claremorris to Collooney section as matter of priority.
- ✦ The Department of Transport should authorise an independent review of the Claremorris to Colooney line as a matter of priority.
- ✦ The establishment of a joint Assembly-Oireachtas committee to evaluate the findings being produced by the Department of Regional Development in the north on the development of the rail network in the northwest. The proposed Derry to Letterkenny railway line, with the extension to Sligo and the proposed link from the North West to Dublin should also be reviewed.
- ✦ All former disused railway lines be safeguarded as a matter of priority, with a review of reopening such lines, using emerging low cost technology railway lines with pilot schemes in counties West Cork and Kerry.
- ✦ Freight transport to become a key element of the Western Sustainable Transport Corridor, which could through the developments in freight technology deliver predictable, cost effective and efficient transportation of products. Recently closed freight transport lines should therefore be reviewed in light of developments in freight technology and the heavy traffic congestion on the national road network.
- ✦ Atlantic Corridor to be designated a Sustainable Transport Corridor. The purpose of such a strategy would be to ensure that both high quality road infrastructure and high quality rail infrastructure receive equal priority in the delivery of infrastructure in the western coastal region. The overall objectives of the Sustainable Transport Corridor would be to address the Region's economic, environmental and social needs, bringing about reductions in traffic congestion and CO2 emissions by linking the Gateway city of Waterford with the north-west Gateway city of Derry.
- ✦ Local county council road departments should be transformed into sustainable transport departments which would be given to role of developing sustainable transportation within their counties and to ensure an integrated approach to road and rail transport.
- ✦ Integrated ticket systems using smartcards (e.g. Oyster);
- ✦ Feeder minibuses from surrounding towns to train stations;
- ✦ Promotion of commercially shared taxi services operating at rail stations on the Western region;
- ✦ Provision of parking facilities for both cars and bicycles at rail stations;
- ✦ Audit of bus services and timetables to take into account changing, demographics in areas due to recent housing developments.
- ✦ New Rural Transport Survey should be undertaken to update our information on the level of unmet rural transport needs in Ireland.
- ✦ Large-scale demand-responsive dial-up transit system similar to the programme adopted in the Netherlands should be reviewed as a matter of priority with the objective of it becoming a central element to a New Rural Transport Scheme.
- ✦ Rural Transport Programmes should operate to county boundaries as a matter of priority and not within natural catchment areas.
- ✦ New remarketed Rural Transport Scheme should be launched with services to the wider public such as commuters.
- ✦ New sustainable transport departments operating under the county councils, as recommended in Section 2, should be given responsibility for the rolling out of a new Rural Transport Scheme and given responsibility for ensuring entire counties are covered.

- ✦ The Inter-departmental Working Group on Rural Public Transport should be re-established with a timeframe and mandate to review a possible relaunching of the rural transport programme.
- ✦ Tourism agencies, airport authorities and the business sector should play a key role in the development of transport systems to connect international and regional airports.
- ✦ State and regional authorities should encourage airlines to coordinate their arrivals and departures to ensure that people can enter and leave the Western seaboard airports without delay.
- ✦ Planned spending of €86 million, announced in February 2007, on the development of regional airports should go ahead.
- ✦ Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources should identify renewable energy zones on the Western seaboard region and develop guidelines as to encourage the development at community and regional levels of renewable energies such as ocean and wind energy. The guidelines would also ensure that no projects would adversely affect the environment and scenic beauty of western counties.
- ✦ a new regional funding scheme for the Western Coastal Region to ensure that gas infrastructure is delivered. This scheme could ensure that funding for 'uneconomic towns' is granted to make up for the shortfall of revenue as against the cost of delivering the infrastructure

Communications and Energy

- ✦ In conjunction with local councils, that the Department of Communications should carry out inspections of areas which broadband providers claim to be connected, but have been identified as blackspots by local councils. The National Broadband Scheme (NBS) Map should be amended accordingly as a matter of priority, to ensure that these areas are now declared to be without broadband and therefore form part of the NBS.
- ✦ Making mandatory the installation of telecommunications ducting on an open access basis on all national road upgrades. Ducting should also be mandatory in planning guidelines for all new residential, commercial and public building developments.
- ✦ Creation of regional broadband awareness schemes to ensure that the public are aware of their broadband availability and the potential of businesses to grow using broadband technology.
- ✦ Minimum bandwidth of 7Mb/s by 2011 be agreed for all towns with populations of over 5,000.
- ✦ State financial support should be provided to pilot next generation broadband schemes in at least three towns in each of the 10 Western seaboard counties in which broadband infrastructure enables it.
- ✦ Programmes should be put in place through local authorities to train, network and advise individuals and groups in starting up sustainable energy companies.

Health

- ✦ 'The replacement of the current inequitable healthcare system with a universal public health system offering equality of geographic access, free at point of delivery.
- ✦ Development of a funding formula designed to deliver greater equality in health service provision between the regions.
- ✦ Routine publication and mapping of health statistics, including death rates from diseases, at county and county borough level.
- ✦ 'The development of a system of graded incentives proportional to remoteness to promote general practice in isolated areas.
- ✦ Retention and development of the thirteen acute public hospitals in the West of Ireland threatened with closure under the Hanly and Teamwork Reports.
- ✦ Retention of the 1 700 public beds in the region's acute hospitals threatened with closure under the PA report.
- ✦ Retention of Ireland's network of second-level hospitals: these hospitals should offer 24/7 inpatient A&E, including acute surgery, and maternity care.
- ✦ Reorganisation of hospital services to sustain surgery in smaller public hospitals.
- ✦ Medical trainers should be required to develop a new subspecialty, a special interest in smaller hospitals.
- ✦ Well resourced emergency responses, such as first

responder programmes, should be developed in disadvantaged regions in the West.

- ✦ Midwife-led units and home birth services, which are central to systems of care in countries such as Germany and The Netherlands, should be developed in Western seaboard counties
- ✦ Services for chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes, should remain integrated under public hospital control, as they are at present.
- ✦ National cancer strategy should be revised to provide for a balanced regional approach, particularly in relation to surgery and radiology.
- ✦ The replacement of the current inequitable healthcare system with a universal public health system offering equality of geographic access, free at point of delivery.

Education and Childcare

- ✦ An urgent review by the Office of the Minister for Children on the soaring costs of childcare, with a focus on reducing childcare costs by 50% for all families and 75% for low income families while setting a target of 1% of GDP to be spent on childcare.
- ✦ Equal access to good childcare and a reversal to the changes in the Child Care Subvention Scheme
- ✦ Clustering for smaller schools should be encouraged by way of grants for clustering projects.
- ✦ Cluster coordinator should be provided as an extra post of responsibility.
- ✦ A variety of models needs to be explored in different counties depending on the spatial proximity and human and material resources of the schools. It is therefore recommended that a number of projects should be piloted in the Western seaboard counties.
- ✦ Reverse the cuts in education including reducing class sizes and delivering on the school building programme.

Consideration should be given to the following cluster initiatives:

- ✦ A public networking body operating under the county boards to coordinate and roll-out small clustering of schools and the coordination of administrative and material support;
- ✦ A person or persons who are employed for a cluster

of schools to undertake administrative and other ancillary work;

- ✦ Appointment of specialised teachers in IT, drama or PE on a permanent clustered schools basis;
- ✦ Joint board of management meetings;
- ✦ Joint parent organisation meetings;
- ✦ Sharing of exercises and expertise;
- ✦ Sharing of resources.
- ✦ Higher Education Authority's expert group on open and distance learning should be mandated to have regard to the economic, social and educational needs of the regions when bringing forward proposals for a national strategy on higher and open education.

Garda and an Post Services

- ✦ Coherent strategy to maximise Garda visibility in rural areas.
- ✦ Administrative services must be civilianised and brought up to 40% of the total workforce within the Garda service in line with international standards and to ensure that more Gardaí are available at rural stations.
- ✦ In order to ensure the proper functioning of Garda stations in rural areas there needs to be a minimum of 2 Gardaí present while stations are open.
- ✦ Specific criteria be set in relation to the size and distribution of postal network, which would take into account socioeconomic factors, demographics, geographic areas and the minimum distance to post offices.
- ✦ Combining postal services with council services to provide insurance and taxation services.
- ✦ Developing post offices as centres of information.
- ✦ Making door-to-door delivery of parcels to people with impaired mobility.
- ✦ Delivering welfare payments such as pensions to the doors of customers with impaired mobility
- ✦ Ordering service for elderly people of daily necessities.
- ✦ Information service on childcare services available.
- ✦ Information service on local transport.
- ✦ Combining postal services with Business Points.
- ✦ To use post office buildings for community meetings.

- ✦ Government intervenes in the form of a Public Service Obligation order to enable the subvention of post offices in rural areas along the Western seaboard region to ensure post masters' incomes are brought to the minimum wage as a matter of priority.
- ✦ County councils should be given special funding as matter of priority to roll out the subvention and prevent post offices from closing. Such an intervention should be done along with a reform package to enable postal services scheduled for closure to reform and deliver more social services.

Social Exclusion and Community Development

- ✦ Funding for Community Development Projects should be channelled through one Government Department. A single Government Department should therefore be given responsibility for administering all community and voluntary funding. Funding for CDPs could then be divided into broad categories, which would enable community groups to see if their workplan and projects are eligible.
- ✦ Regional data on poverty should be collected and published on an annual basis.

Islands

- ✦ The Government should bring forward a Charter of Rights, based on the needs of the individual islands, which would be guaranteed in law. These rights would form the basis of a strategy to re-populate the islands and encourage young people to stay. The charter would include the right to access the islands through proper piers and airstrips, with targets and timescales and the right to essential social services.
- ✦ A job creation strategy with targets and timescales should be drafted by Údarás na Gaeltachta based on the needs of each island.
- ✦ There should be continued investment in infrastructure such as in airstrips, piers and helipads is maintained to ensure the quality of infrastructure is maintained.
- ✦ Video conference technology should be rolled out to all islands along with a programme of initiatives

for enterprise and services to maximise the use of video conference.

- ✦ There should be proper policy development to ensure that when awarding ferry service contracts that the social and economic needs of the island people shall be met by the ferry services such as commuting to work and accessing services.
- ✦ Islanders should be encouraged to get involved in agri-tourism and to produce organic agricultural products through an agri-tourism island programme.
- ✦ Investment in infrastructure should also be directed at fishing and provision should be made for suitable piers and harbours, cold storage, ice and basic processing;
- ✦ Island cooperatives and development companies should be facilitated in buying fishing licences and/or polyvalent 'tonnage' which could be leased out to island fishermen who wish to enter the industry or to expand their fishing operations. Tonnage which comes up for sale should be restricted for sale on islands. Foreshore licences should, when not being used, be banked for purchase or use by other islanders in the future;
- ✦ Island cooperatives and development companies should be facilitated in applying for licences for aquaculture.
- ✦ University and government departments should be asked to draft a policy to begin outsourcing administrative work to the islands;
- ✦ Island co-ops/development companies should be supported in developing a profile of their island with information on services, demographics, skills etc. which would be useful for potential employers/employees and entrepreneurs.
- ✦ Island children should have access to preschool education for 1 year prior to entering the mainstream education system.
- ✦ All schools should have a minimum of 2 full time teachers or one teacher and one full time assistant.
- ✦ Educational psychologists and speech therapists should be given training to acquire sufficient fluency in Irish for providing services on Gaeltacht islands.
- ✦ A full range of second level subjects should be taught at island schools either through send teachers to islands on a part-time basis or through video conference.
- ✦ Island women should be given greater choice in

maternity care, including visits on the island from midwives. The right of access to midwives should be guaranteed by the HSE.

- ✦ Ancillary services such as chiropody should be provided at regular intervals.
- ✦ Health services personnel visiting Gaeltacht areas to be offered training in Irish to help them become fluent.
- ✦ Legislation should be put in place relating specifically to educational rights for island communities

An Ghaeltacht

- ✦ Establish An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta as a statutory body, the Department of Education and Science could then delegate all policy considerations related to every aspect of the Gaeltacht education system to this statutory body.
- ✦ Establishment of language acquisition schools in Category A Gaeltacht districts for children who do not speak Irish. This scheme would provide services from primary to post-primary education to enable children to acquire a sufficient fluency in Irish to participate in Irish language education.
- ✦ Adoption of the proposal for an entry policy to Gaeltacht primary schools to ensure that children must be able to speak Irish in order to gain entry. For secondary schools it is proposed that entry should be limited to those who come from Irish speaking families and children who have come through Irish language primary schools.
- ✦ Statutory mechanism should be provided to differentiate between the different types of Gaeltacht communities which exist within the statutory Gaeltacht boundaries.
- ✦ Defined minimum criteria for the awarding of statutory Gaeltacht status;
- ✦ Statutory definition of the term 'Gaeltacht' in the context of the Act as 'limistéir shainithe phleanála teanga' [designated language planning districts] should be clarified, as distinct from any other linguistic or colloquial meaning the word Gaeltacht might otherwise have.
- ✦ Primary role of the Minister and of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, on behalf

of the State, should be reaffirmed as responsible for cultural, social, economic, infrastructure and educational interests of the Gaeltacht.

- ✦ All plans and statutory provisions should be integrated into a comprehensive and cohesive planning process which would include language planning, local and physical planning, education planning, structural planning and social planning including family support services.
- ✦ Local area plans provided for under planning legislation should be developed within the next 12 months for all Gaeltacht areas. Such plans should be drafted in consultation with socio-linguistic experts and local representatives to ensure the Irish language is protected as a community language.
- ✦ Establishment of a research centre for the south-west, west and north-west which would give accreditation to postgraduate students involved in PHD research;
- ✦ Establishment of a dedicated Third Level Education Unit for Irish Language sociolinguistic studies and language planning, including teaching and research, with appropriate resources and funded by the Higher Education Authority.
- ✦ Translation courses such as lawyer linguist and masters in interpretation should be reviewed with the goal of establishing courses in Gaeltacht areas;
- ✦ High speed broadband connections should be brought to the seven Gaeltacht sites where Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge have outreach centres.
- ✦ Creation of new masters courses in Language Planning and Policy, business management, administration in Irish, arts and communications to be located in Gaeltacht areas.
- ✦ Establishment of an all-Ireland initiative to promote partnerships between third level institutions and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with the objective of locating and expanding departments in the Gaeltacht areas and providing courses to meet the needs of the region.
- ✦ Higher Education Institute review into the creation of a joint partnership with a Gaeltacht area and an Institute of Technology to research the development and production of language and translation technologies.
- ✦ Enhanced cooperation between Gaeltacht cultural tourism providers and commercial providers, which

could be achieved through forums at local level.

- ✦ Calendar of Gaeltacht events and festivities to inform tourists of what is happening throughout the year.
- ✦ Cultural activities such as festivals and tours should be bundled into Gaeltacht packages.
- ✦ Educational tour groups should be targeted for packages such as a tour of the Gaeltachtaí.
- ✦ Evening entertainment, tickets and packages for concerts and events held in Gaeltacht areas.
- ✦ Local connections between operator and musicians for nighttime, entertainment for a non-pub audience.

Structural Reform

- ✦ Balanced regional development should be articulated in law, defining the regional boundaries and giving one Government Department responsibility for regional development.
- ✦ The Department of the Environment should be given overall responsibility for regional development and renamed the Department of the Environment and Regional Development. Its remit would be to advise other departments and agencies on regional policies, to monitor impacts of government policies, to work closely with regional assemblies and authorities and to co-ordinate with the Department of Regional Development in the north.
- ✦ The counties of the Western seaboard (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo, Clare, Kerry, West Cork and West Limerick) should be treated as a distinct region with sub-regions of North West, West and South West.
- ✦ A Regional Development Impact Assessment framework should be established in law to compel all state bodies and departments to make an assessment of whether policies being developed would create regional imbalance and set out what steps could be taken to amend such a policy to ensure balanced regional development. The Impact Assessment would be published at each stage of policy process.
- ✦ When a person or group believes that their region will be affected by a state policy, leading to imbalanced regional development, they could

complain at first instance to the policy director of the department in question who would have to respond within one month of the complaint. Any further complaints would be made to the Equality Commission who could initiate an investigation with the full cooperation of the department.

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- ✦ Forfás and other bodies such as Enterprise Ireland should be given the task of innovation strategies for the regions.
- ✦ A range of social and economic indicators of regional development should be drawn up and used to monitor the output of all government departments.
- ✦ Social and economic data should be collected and published county by county so that plans tailored to the needs of individual regions in terms of job creation, infrastructure and public service delivery can be delivered.
- ✦ A forum on regional development should be established in order to review the data gathered through the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) Monitoring System so as to incorporate the information within the decision making process.
- ✦ Consideration should be given to the development of a political mandate for regional bodies via direct regional elections to Regional Assemblies and/or Regional Authorities.
- ✦ Structural funds should be provided directly to the Regional Assemblies and the remaining 'matched funding' should be provided by the exchequer to facilitate the development and roll-out of value-added regional initiatives and investment programme.
- ✦ Regional planning guidelines should be enforced by the Regional Authorities in the context of delivering the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) goals at regional levels.
- ✦ The 1999 White Paper on Rural Development should be reviewed to give a properly articulated role for the economic development of market towns and the wider rural areas.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF ROADS IN PROGRESS

The planned works that are currently not listed as completed or in progress are:

N17
N20
N15 Ballybofey/Stranorlar Bypass
N15 Lifford to Stranorlar
N15 Sligo to County Boundary
N17 Collooney to Tobercurry
N17 Galway to Tuam
N17 Tobercurry Bypass
N17 Tobercurry Bypass to Knock Bypass
N17 Tuam Bypass
N17 Tuam to Claremorris
N18 Fort to Crusheen
N18 Oranmore to Gort
N20 Croom to Patrickswell
N20 Mallow to Croom
N25 Carrigtwohill to Midleton
N25 Cork SRR Interchanges
N25 Dungarvan Bypass
N25 Midleton to Youghal
N25 New Ross Bypass
N25 Waterford to Glenmore.

REGIONAL DATA SOURCES USED

The Report uses data based on the Western region (Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal), individual county statistics and in some circumstances statistics for the Border Midlands and Western region (BMW). The variety of regional data is due to the current practice of drafting policies and collecting data based upon NUTS2 (nomenclature of Territorial Units) i.e. Border Midlands and Western (BMW) and the South East (S&E) regions, particularly in areas such as infrastructure. This has presented certain difficulties, in that the midland counties in the BMW are outside the terms of reference of the Report, whereas counties West Cork and Kerry form part of the S&E region. The Report has, however, used other statistical information based on NUTS 3 data (Dublin, South East, South West, Mid-West, Mid-East, West, and Border) and county data where it was available. It is hoped that through the different regional and county data that an accurate picture of the Western seaboard Region has been drawn.

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF GROUPS WHO MADE SUBMISSIONS

West Cork local business association
'Ripple' Quays regeneration project
West Cork IFA
Island Irish language College
Island Co-op
Special Educational Needs Parents Group
Bring Back Swansea-Cork Ferry Campaign
Kerry County Enterprise Board
Kerry County Development Board
Kerry North Kerry Together
Kerry LEADER
Shannon Development Company
Kerry Chambers of Commerce
Clare IFA Regional Director
Ennis Hospital Action Group
Galway Chamber of Commerce
Galway County Council
Gallimh le Gailge
Conradh na Gaeilge, Gallimh
Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann
Comhair Chumann Árann
Western Development Commission
BMW (Border, Midlands, Western) Regional Assembly
Mayo County Council
Mayo Family and Community Resource Centre
Mayo Quayside Development Project
Mayo Westport Youth Activities
Mayo Westport Family & Community Resource Centre
Mayo Community Transport Initiative
Mayo Community Platform
Mayo Age Action
Mayo Intercultural Community Platform
Mayo 'The Cove' Youth Café
Mayo Chamber of Commerce
Mayo Disability Group
Leitrim County Council
Leitrim County Development Board
Leitrim Integrated Development Group
Leitrim Partnership Group
North Leitrim Men's Group
North Leitrim Community Forum
Sligo Chamber of Commerce
Sligo County Council
Sligo Community Platform
Sligo LEADER
Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
Donegal County Council
Donegal SIPTU
Inisowen Development Partnership, Carndonagh and Buncrana
Letterkenny Community Development Project
Muintearas, Community Projects Co. Donegal
McNutts of Downings, textile business
West on Track
Joe Desmond
Irish Post Masters Union
Sinn Féin West of Ireland Committee
Minister Conor Murphy, Department of Regional Development

APPENDIX 5

**An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí Ealaíon, Spóirt,
Turasóireachta, Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta**

Teach Laighean
Baile Átha Cliath 2

**Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community,
Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs**

Leinster House
Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 618 3000
Fax: (01) 618 4123 / 618 4124

Members of the Joint Committee

Deputies:

Áine Brady (FF)
Cyprian Brady (FF)
Seán Connick (FF)
John Cregan (FF)
Pat the Cope Gallagher (FF) [Chairman]
Michael Kennedy (FF) [Vice-Chairman]
Dinny McGinley (FG)
Olivia Mitchell (FG)
John O'Mahony (FG)
Michael Ring (FG)
Mary Upton (Lab)
Jack Wall (Lab)
Mary A. White (GP) [Convenor]

Senators:

Larry Butler
Jerry Buttimer [Convenor]
Pearse Doherty
Alan Kelly
Tony Kett
Labhrás Ó Murchú

APPENDIX 6

HEALTH CARE REFERENCES

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was emailed to a specialist unit, which found 18 of them to be abnormal, with 6 requiring transfer to a neurosurgical unit. The authors concluded that 96 per cent of those with a head injury severe enough to warrant hospitalisation could be managed safely in a non-specialist unit with access to CT and email facilities. Telemedicine was likely to improve trauma care in Ireland significantly over the next decade, they concluded.

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